DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 254 097	FL 014 899
AUTHOR	Holland, V. Melissa; And Others
TITLE	English-as-a-Second-Language Programs in Basic Skills Education Program I.
INSTITUTION	American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Army Research Inst. for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Alexandria, Va.
REPORT NO	AIR-1359
PUB DATE	Jan 84
CONTRACT	MDA903-81-C-AA04
NOTE	125p.; For related document, see ED 245 567.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Armed Forces; Basic Skills; Educational Assessment; *Educational Needs; *English (Second Language); *Limited English Speaking; *Military Personnel; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Puerto Ricans
IDENTIFIERS	*Army

ABSTRACT

In an effort to assess the educational needs of limited-English-speaking personnel in the U.S. Army and to assess the effectiveness of existing programs in English as a second language (ESL), information was gathered from analysis of files on limited-English-speaking soldiers, 2,804 of whom were enrolled in the ESL program, and field studies of seven ESL programs using questionnaires, classroom observations, and oral proficiency testing. The data are intended for use in deciding whether existing programs should be curtailed, maintained, or expanded, and to decide about recruiting and training limited-English-speaking soldiers. It was found that the majority of limited-English-speaking soldiers are insular Puerto Rican and have at least high school diplomas. Those enrolled in ESL programs reported favorable feelings about programs and teachers, but also felt that greater emphasis should be placed on speaking and listening rather than on reading and writing the language. Gains in English comprehension test scores averaged two points per week during the six-week programs, and soldiers with final scores above 50 were more likely to succeed in the Advanced Individual Training than lower scoring soldiers. A high correlation was found between the reading and writing based English comprehension test and an oral proficiency test. Across installations, ESL programs differ in size, curricula, teaching techniques, and philosophy, but all produced improvements in English language skills. (Author/MSE)

****
*   Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made   *
*   from the original document.   *
****

ED254097

FL014899

Research Report 1359

English-as-a-Second-Language Programs in Basic Skills Education Program I

V. Melissa Holland, Harvey Rosenbaum,
Susan Stoddart and Janice C. Redish
American Institutes for Research

Joan Harman and Rebecca L. Oxford-Carpenter
Army Research Institute

Instructional Technology Systems Technical Area
Training Research Laboratory

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Army Research Inst.
for Behavioral + Soc. Sciences
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U. S. Army
Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

January 1984

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

U. S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

A Field Operating Agency under the Jurisdiction of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel

EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Technical Director

L. NEALE COSBY
Colonel, IN
Commander

Research accomplished under contract
for the Department of the Army

American Institutes for Research

Technical review by

Richard P. Kern
Leonard A. White

NOTICES

DISTRIBUTION: Primary distribution of this report has been made by ARI. Please address correspondence concerning distribution of reports to: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, ATTN: PERI-POT, 5001 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22333.

FINAL DISPOSITION: This report may be destroyed when it is no longer needed. Please do not return it to the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

NOTE: The findings in this report are not to be construed as an official Department of the Army position, unless so designated by other authorized documents.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UNCLASSIFIED
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM

1. REPORT NUMBER: Research Report 1359
2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.:
3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER:
4. TITLE (and Subtitle): English-as-a-Second-Language Programs in Basic Skills Education Program I
5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED:
6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER:
7. AUTHOR(s): V. Melissa Holland, Harvey Rosenbaum, Susan Stoddart, Janice C. Redish (AIR), Joan Harman and Rebecca L. Oxford-Carpenter (ARI)
8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s): MDA903-81-C-AA04
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS:

American Institutes for Research
1055 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS: 2Q263743A794
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS:

Office of the Adjutant General
Education Center
Alexandria, VA 22333

12. REPORT DATE: January 1984
13. NUMBER OF PAGES: 119
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office):

US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral
and Social Sciences
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333-5600

15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report): Unclassified
15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE:
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report): Approved for public release; distribution unlimited
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report):
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES: See Research Note 84-19 for the appendix to this report.
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number):

English
Language
Basic Skills
Literacy
Education
Instruction

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

The Department of the Army needs information to aid in making decisions about English language programs and limited-English-speaking soldiers. This information was gathered by analyzing data tapes covering more than 4000 soldiers and by carrying out a field study at seven Army posts. All data show improvements in test scores over the six-weeks of instruction. Soldiers with higher final scores are more likely to succeed in AIT. Although soldiers made favorable comments about programs and teachers, they report a need for more experience with speaking and listening as opposed to reading and writing.

DD FORM 1 JAN 73 1473 EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 IS OBSOLETE

UNCLASSIFIED
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

Microfilmed From
Best Available Copy

Research Report 1359

English-as-a-Second-Language Programs in Basic Skills Education Program I

V. Melissa Holland, Harvey Rosenbaum,
Susan Stoddart and Janice C. Redish
American Institutes for Research

Joan Harman and Rebecca L. Oxford-Carpenter
Army Research Institute

Submitted by
Zita M. Simutis, Chief
Instructional Technology Systems Technical Area

Approved as technically adequate
and submitted for publication by
Harold F. O'Neil, Jr., Director
Training Research Laboratory

U.S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
5001 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22333

Office, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel
Department of the Army

January 1984

Army Project Number 2Q263743A794	Education and Training

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

ARI Research Reports and Technical Reports are intended for sponsors of R&D tasks and for other research and military agencies. Any findings ready for implementation at the time of publication are presented in the last part of the Brief. Upon completion of a major phase of the task, formal recommendations for official action normally are conveyed to appropriate military agencies by briefing or Disposition Form.

FOREWORD

The Instructional Technology Systems Technical Area of the US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences performs research and development in educational technology with applications to military education and training. A major focus of this research is the development of information on which the Department of the Army can base decisions about its Basic Skills Education Program. This report evaluates one of the Basic Skills Programs--the six-week English-as-a-Second Language Program provided at training bases as part of BSEP I.

Limited English speaking soldiers tend to have difficulties such as culture shock, the inability to follow directions and understand written material, low motivation, and have the potential to be safety risks. The Army, therefore, provides six weeks of English language instruction to prepare these soldiers to succeed during Initial Entry Training. The programs evaluated improved English language skills for all enrolled soldiers. However, those with the greatest deficiencies tended to graduate without meeting the test score criterion and demonstrated higher attrition during training. The Army must consider, therefore, whether to modify its English language programs to further improve the skills of highly deficient soldiers.

This research effort was supported by the Office of the Adjutant General and the Training and Doctrine Command.

Edgar M Johnson
EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Technical Director

ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN BASIC SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAM I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Requirement:

The Department of the Army has a need for information on which to base decisions about English language programs and about accepting and training limited-English-speaking soldiers in the Army.

Procedure:

Two data sources were used to compile information on 6-week English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs:

1. Analysis of files on limited-English-speaking soldiers, 2,804 of whom were enrolled in ESL programs, and 1,679 of whom were eligible but did not participate in any language program.
2. Field studies of seven ESL programs involving questionnaires, classroom observations, and oral proficiency testing.

Findings:

The majority of limited-English-speaking soldiers are insular Puerto Rican and have at least high school diplomas. Those enrolled in ESL programs report favorable feelings about programs and teachers. However, they also felt that programs should place greater emphasis on speaking and listening to English rather than reading and writing the language. Gains in English Comprehension Level Test scores average 2 points per week. Soldiers with final scores above 50 are more likely to succeed in AIT than lower scoring soldiers. A high correlation was found between the reading and writing based English Comprehension Level Test and an Oral Proficiency Test. Across installations, ESL programs differ in size, curricula, teaching techniques, and philosophy. All, however, produce improvements in English language skills.

Utilization of Findings:

The data gathered as a result of the effort can be of use to the Department of the Army to decide if existing ESL programs should be curtailed, maintained, or expanded and to make decisions about recruiting and training limited-English-speaking soldiers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Rationale for the Study 1
Data Sources 2
Sites Included in the Field Study 3
Methodology for the Field Study. 4
Considerations in the Field Study Data Collection 5
Structure of the Report 7

II. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE. 9

Introduction 9
Traditional Methods 9
Modern Methods 10
ESL Classrooms Today 12

III. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS 17

Variables Discussed in this Chapter 17
The ESL Population Across all Posts 17
Summary and Implications of Background Characteristics 34
Breakdown of Student Characteristics by Program 36

IV. STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS 45

Attitudes and Perceptions Across all Programs. . . . 46
Program Differences. 65

V. PROGRAM EFFECTS. 73

ECL Gains. 73
Performance in AIT 79
Oral Proficiency 89

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(Continued)

CHAPTER Page

VI. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS 93

- Teachers and Administration 93
- Philosophy, Curriculum, and Teaching Techniques 97
- Program Size, Selection Procedures, and Military Context 100
- Summary 104
- Implications for Implementing the New DLI Curriculum 105

REFERENCES 109

LIST OF TABLES

Page

3-1 Enrollment of the ESL Program. 18
3-2 Percent of ESL Enrollees in Each Primary Language Group During FY79-81. 20
3-3 Percent of ESL and BSEP Enrollees Attaining Each of Two Education-Levels 22
3-4 Percent of Enrollees in Each Entry ECL Range . . 23
3-5 Percent of FY 79-81 Enrollees and Eligibles in Each ECL Range by Primary Language Group. . . 25
3-6 Distribution of Responses on Selected Items About Students' Backgrounds from the AIR Student Questionnaire. 27
3-7 Percent of Enrollees and Eligibles in Each Military Component 33
3-8 Percent of Enrollees in Each Entry ECL Range by Regular Army (RA) vs. National Guard (NG) . . 35
3-9 Enrollment and Percentage of Enrolled Eligibles for the 7 Largest ESL Programs During FY79-81 37
3-10 Percent of FY 79-81 Enrollees and Eligibles in Each Entry ECL Range by ESL Program 40
3-11 Percent of Enrollees in Each Primary Language Group and at Two Education Levels, by Program. . 41
3-12 Percent of Enrollees and Eligibles in Each Military Component During FY79-81 by ESL Program. 43

4-1 Distribution of Responses on Selected Items About Attitudes and Perceptions from AIR Student Questionnaire. 47
4-2 Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre": for Understanding Spoken English 56
4-3 Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre": for Speaking English 56
4-4 Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre": for Reading English. 57
4-5 Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre": for Writing English. 57
4-6 Number of Questionnaire Respondents by Post. . . 66

5-1 Mean ECL Gains of ESL Enrollees During FY79-81 . 74
5-1A ECL Gains for ESL Programs of Different Lengths. 75
5-2A Total Mean ECL Gains for the Seven Major ESL Programs 77
5-2 Mean ECL Gains for the Seven Major ESL Programs During FY79-81 78
5-2B Adjusted Total Mean ECL Gains for the Seven Major ESL Programs 79
5-3 Percent of Enrollees in Each Fiscal Year by AIT Performance. 81
5-4 Percent of Enrollees (FY79-81) in Each Category of AIT Performance by Exit ECL. 83

LIST OF TABLES
(Cont'd.)

Page

5-5 Students Achieving Exit ECL of $\geq$ 50 by Entry ECL 84
5-6 Attrition by ECL Gains During ESL Training . . . 84
5-7 Percent of FY79-81 Enrollees and Non-Enrollees at Each Category of Performance in AIT by Entry ECL Level 86
5-8 ESL Enrollees Who Were Recycled 87
5-9 Oral Proficiency Gains for the 3-Month DLI Students and 6-Week BSEP I/ESL Students 90

I. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the Army's English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses at seven TRADOC installations as they operated during our observation period (December 1981 to March 1982), with additional data from records covering FY 79, 80, and 81. Our purpose in this study is to provide information that will help the Department of the Army in making decisions about ESL programs and about the acceptance and training of limited-English-speaking soldiers in the Army.

Rationale for the Study

The Army is concerned about the cost-effectiveness of recruiting and training soldiers who do not bring to the Army sufficient skills for a successful Army tour. Soldiers with serious language problems may have an adverse effect on safety, morale, and mission accomplishment, but the limited-English-speaking population (particularly insular Puerto Rican) represents a desirable recruitment pool. Most Puerto Rican recruits are highly motivated, well-educated in their native language, and cooperative soldiers. Furthermore, Hispanics are currently underrepresented in the Army in relation to their percentage in the general population; and, as the general recruitment pool shrinks, the importance of the Hispanics' recruitment pool is projected to grow significantly. The birthrate among Hispanics continues to exceed that of the general population. To improve the effectiveness of limited-English-speaking soldiers, the Army provides English-as-a-second-language instruction in the training base, BSEP I/ESL.

The current BSEP I/ESL program is not uniform across sites. It varies from installation to installation in size, philosophy, curriculum, and program organization. Until now, there has been no comprehensive description of what each program is like.

A comprehensive description of the current BSEP I/ESL programs serves several purposes. Only with a systematic description of each program can we understand differences in effects across programs. Only with adequate descriptive information can we identify both successful program elements and serious problems. Only with detailed program descriptions can the Army benefit from the experiences of these programs in making decisions about how to improve ESL instruction and in evaluating future ESL programs.

A clear picture of the current programs is also needed as a baseline against which to judge the effectiveness of the new standardized curriculum, developed by the Defense Language Institute (DLI), which is scheduled to replace all of the programs described in this report in July 1982. This study should also be useful to those who must introduce the new course to the different installations. Successful implementation of the new course will depend at least in part on adapting the course and the course management plan to the constraints imposed by program size, hiring practices, teachers' attitudes, philosophies of training, and other aspects of ESL course delivery that we describe in this report.

Data Sources

Data for this study come from two primary sources:

- retrospective data from TRADOC files on 2,804 limited-English-speaking soldiers who enrolled in BSEP I/ESL courses in FY 79, 80, and 81 and on 1679 eligibles who did not enroll;
- a field study of seven BSEP I/ESL programs.

The BSEP I/ESL program data for FY79-81 available to us from TRADOC includes information on every installation that had a BSEP/ESL program during the FY79-81 period and that submitted DA Form 1821-2-R to TRADOC. The data base therefore includes information on several very small programs that we did not visit and excludes information on the Fort Jackson program. Fort Jackson did not submit records on ESL enrollees to TRADOC during the FY79-81 years.

Using this data base for cross-program comparisons requires a critical assumption: that the installation named on DA Form 1821-2-R is the installation where soldiers received ESL training. This assumption has a high probability of being correct for most cases on file; but for non-OSUT installations it is possible that the installation named is the site of AIT, but not of ESL training. This possibility, though unlikely, requires us to treat inferences about program differences drawn from the TRADOC data with some caution.

Note that the data base used for the analyses in this report differs somewhat from the data base used in earlier AIR reports on BSEP/ESL, in particular from the January 1982 AIR Interim Status Report on ESL training (Krug & Wise, pp. 4-9) and the March 1982 AIR Semi-Annual Technical Report on BSEP. For the version used in this report, we have eliminated duplicate cases and used a more accurate basis for estimating the date of the accession to ESL of each case on file with TRADOC. This new basis results in fewer cases than previously calculated for some years; more cases for other years. The largest difference is for FY81, where our present data base is smaller by more than 200 students (or 1/4) than the earlier data base. The current version is more accurate, but both versions appear to yield approximately the same overall distributions on important variables: e.g., percent of eligibles who are enrolled, percent in each military component, etc.

Sites Included in the Field Study

In this report, we provide detailed case studies for seven installations operating BSEP I/ESL programs. These are:

- Fort Benning,
- Fort Dix,
- Fort Gordon,
- Fort Jackson,
- Fort Knox,
- Fort Sill, and
- Fort Leonard Wood.

These sites include all posts with BSEP I/ESL programs that

- had more than 100 students during the three-year period covered by the TRADOC data base (FY 79-81), and
- still have active BSEP I/ESL Programs*

Methodology for the Field Study

Schedule of visits. A preliminary visit was made to Ft. Dix in October. Between December 1981 and March 1982, ESL specialists from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), in teams of two observers, made two or more visits to each of the seven posts. The first and second visits were scheduled five weeks apart to enable us to interview the same group of soldiers at the beginning and again at the end of their ESL training.

Data collection techniques. The research techniques we used were both formal and informal. The formal instruments were:

- questionnaires on background and attitude given to 500 soldiers and to 35 teachers,
- oral proficiency interviews given as a pre-test to all soldiers entering one program during the week of our first visit and as a post-test to the same soldiers five weeks later (N=33),
- a structured observation form to describe the activities in the ESL classes.

The reader will find copies of all of the instruments in an Appendix. In addition, we collected ECL scores from the soldiers' records. We also collected samples of curriculum materials and lesson plans at each post to facilitate both the description of the program and cross-program comparisons. Informal research techniques included:

---

*Fort Jackson meets these criteria even though data from the Ft. Jackson program is not in the TRADOC data base. We included Ft. Gordon even though its program is now much smaller and serves only soldiers in AIT. We did not include Ft. Bliss which did have a large program and now has only a few students per year.

- unstructured interviews, both in group sessions and individually; and
- unstructured observations during which we took field notes; these supplemented the information on the classroom observation forms.

Informal interviews with the soldiers were particularly important. When we handed out the written questionnaires, we assured the soldiers that the information they wrote would be kept in confidence and not shown to their drill sergeants, but many of them were still reluctant to put their concerns in writing. When we spoke to them informally in Spanish after they had completed the questionnaires, they expressed themselves openly on a range of issues.

Considerations in the Field Study Data Collection

Using several approaches to obtaining data enabled us to gain a more comprehensive view than we could have gotten from any one source alone. It also enabled us to verify our data; confidence in the qualitative data grows as one hears the same information from multiple sources.

Several of our research techniques were particularly useful in building comprehensive and accurate descriptions. These include:

- being non-judgmental,
- spending sufficient time on each post to speak to all interested parties and to observe full days of ESL classes,
- returning to each post five weeks after our initial visit,
- interviewing a wide range of individuals in a range of settings, and
- working in cross-gender and cross-language teams.

Being non-judgmental. Although we make recommendations in this report based on our observations and on the statistical data that we are reporting, our primary goal is a description of the programs that we observed. By maintaining a non-judgmental attitude, we were able to quickly establish rapport with people on the post. We rarely had to seek people out for interviews; people came to talk to us.

Spending sufficient time. We made two or more visits to each post, and each visit lasted two or three days. With four to ten days at each post, we had sufficient time to talk to Education Officers, ESL teachers, commanders, and soldiers, as well as to observe classes. By spending full days observing the ESL program, we were able to get a comprehensive picture of the strengths, as well as the problems, occurring in each program. At all of the posts, each team member visited each of the classes between two and five times to observe teachers in different activities. (Only one observer visited a classroom at any one time in order to maximize the number of classes seen and to remain as unobtrusive as possible.)

Returning to each post. By waiting five weeks between our first and second visits to each post, we were able to talk with the same group of students at the beginning and again at the end of their ESL training and to learn about their impressions of the course.

Interviewing a wide range of individuals in a range of settings. Different people frequently perceive the same event differently. Therefore, a wide range of viewpoints is needed to get an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the programs and to understand any tensions that we observed on the post.

For example, at one post the ESL teachers and the drill sergeants had different views about physical training for the soldiers taking ESL classes. The teachers told us that the soldiers had too much physical training and therefore were too tired to concentrate during the ESL classes. The teachers felt that the ESL classes should take priority over other activities during the six weeks of ESL classes. They felt that if the soldiers didn't learn English well, they would not succeed in the Army. The drill sergeants, on the other hand, wanted the soldiers to receive the maximum amount of physical training possible. They felt that the soldiers were at the post to learn to be "good soldiers" and their future competence as soldiers depended more on physical training than it did on language training.

If we had only talked with the teachers, we might have concluded that the soldiers' physical training needed to be reduced. However, by listening to the different points of view, we were able to understand the merits of both positions. We concluded that communication needed to take place between the military and Education Center staff so that each could understand the reasoning of the other, and, perhaps, they could agree to make some adjustments in both the military and ESL schedules.

The setting for an interview can also affect the information that one gets. For example, we found that a drill sergeant who hesitated to speak openly about the ESL program while sitting with the ESL teachers in the Education Center would speak more freely at the barracks with the other sergeants present.

Working in cross-gender and cross-language teams. We worked in teams of two--usually a male and a female--at least one of whom was fluent in Spanish. This arrangement enabled us to find the most comfortable situation for each person being interviewed. Some people felt more comfortable speaking to two people; some to one person--usually someone of the same sex.

Having a fluent Spanish speaker on the team proved to be important. Because most of the soldiers had limited fluency in English, they had difficulty expressing themselves when we talked in English. When they were given the opportunity to speak in Spanish, they did so freely. At all of the posts, the soldiers were eager to speak about the ESL programs, particularly in Spanish.

Structure of the Report

In the remainder of this report we present

- a brief introduction to teaching techniques for English-as-a-Second-Language, to give the reader background for understanding our later discussions of ESL classes,
- a description of the ESL students,
- attitudes and perceptions of ESL students towards the ESL courses,

- program outcomes, and
- a summary of program characteristics including a section on implications for implementing the new ESL course.

A separately-bound Appendix includes copies of the questionnaires and other data collection instruments.

II. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Introduction

During our visits to the posts, we observed many ESL classrooms but we saw very little use of modern ESL techniques. Because most teachers at the posts are trained for public school instruction rather than for ESL, they apply the more traditional methods of English grammar and foreign language instruction used in public schools. Because many readers of this report may not be familiar with the various methods for teaching ESL and the controversies in the field, we present a brief overview of ESL teaching. We make many references in Volume Two to the categories of teaching methods described in this chapter.

During this century, linguists, psychologists, educators and others have developed new theories and findings regarding the acquisition of languages, including foreign languages and English as a second language. These theories and findings have led, in turn, to the development of new methods for teaching languages. To understand the revolution in the theory and practice of teaching second languages, we will look at the different models that are widely used.

Traditional Methods

Grammar-Translation Method. After World War I, the dominant method in language teaching was the Grammar-Translation Method. Brown (1980) reports that this method became popular as a result of a study of the teaching of foreign languages in the United States. Because time for teaching foreign languages in schools was limited, teachers decided that the goal should be proficiency in reading rather than proficiency in speaking. The Grammar-Translation Method emphasizes reading, grammar study, and written and oral translation; the approach is still widely used today.

The Audio-Lingual Method: Pattern-Drill Approach. During the 1950s, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) became popular. This approach was influenced by behavioral psychology and structural linguistics. The ALM emphasizes repetition and mimicry: students memorize dialogues and practice drills (e.g., filling in blanks in sentences and turning statements into questions). According to the method, if students repeat the correct pattern a sufficient number of times, they will be able to move from discrete pieces to language as a whole by themselves. The ALM proved to be a disappointment: students did not become conversant in the foreign language (Brown, 1980; Valdman, 1978). Generative linguists and cognitive psychologists criticize the Audio-Lingual Method, pointing out that language is not learned through the memorization of discrete pieces of the language. In addition, they show that pattern practice, by itself, seldom leads to competency in a language (Paulston, 1972; Gingras, 1978). As Crandall (1979, p.16) notes, "with this approach. . . students can leave a class, having practiced repeating and manipulating a pattern, only to find that when they need to use it, they are unable to respond." Students often do not recognize the stimulus which should produce the response. Critics of the ALM believe students need to learn when and how to use the structures that the drills teach. (Benseler & Schulz, 1979).

Even though "current second-language acquisition research appears to show that manipulative-mechanical drills play little part in the implicit language acquisition process" (Gingras, 1978, p.92), a debate still exists regarding the effectiveness of pattern-practice drills as tools for teaching comprehension and speaking in a second language. The ALM is still widely practiced in ESL and foreign language classrooms. However, the criticisms of the generative linguists and cognitive psychologists, coupled with reports of the disappointing experiences of high school and college students using the ALM (Schumann, 1978), have led to the development of more eclectic approaches, usually called "Immersion" or "Situational" approaches.

Modern Methods

Background. During the years in which the ALM was in favor, other approaches for teaching ESL or foreign languages were in use in non-academic settings, such as industry, both here and abroad, in the Peace Corps, and in student foreign exchange programs. In industry, vocational ESL programs were developed to teach workers the necessary English to function in a particular work setting. In these programs, language objectives were integrated sequentially into the context of work-related situations. (See Jupp and Hodlin, 1975; Prince and Gage, 1982). Student foreign exchange programs such as the American Field Service, the American Student Exchange Program, and the Experiment in International Living arranged for U.S. high school and college students to live with families overseas (usually for a year) and attend local schools. Peace Corps volunteers, with some prior language training, spent two years at their posts, "immersed" in the language and the culture of the country where they served. Students and volunteers usually returned from their year(s) abroad speaking and understanding the foreign language because they were immersed in the culture. (According to Schumann [1978], second-language acquisition is a by-product of acculturation.) Because they were forced to use the language (to communicate with their "family," to function in school, or to aid their village), they learned to speak and understand it.

The Situational Approach. The success of students in overseas programs (where they were immersed in the foreign language) strongly influenced ESL and foreign language teachers and theorists to develop the Situational Approach. (One of the problems with the Grammar-Translation Method and with the ALM was that students were taught in an artificial, controlled setting--the classroom--not in a natural context where statements and responses are much more unpredictable and spontaneous and relevant to the students' needs or experiences [Hornby, 1980].) Supporters of the Situational Approach attempt to bring the elements of the natural setting into the classroom. They don't neglect the teaching of language structures; they teach structures systematically and sequentially. The difference between the way that language structures are taught with the ALM and the Situational Approach is not in the language structures that are taught, but in the context in which they are taught and in the methods used to teach them. Instead of lecturing about particular language structures, teachers use them in the class, in the context of situations that are relevant to the experiences of the learners. They introduce the structures sequentially and they model their appropriate use. Using knowledge gained from various research disciplines, supporters of the Situational Approach incorporate the following principles into the teaching of foreign languages and ESL:

1. Use only the target language in the classroom. Avoid translation. Demonstrate the use of the language; don't explain its use.

2. Avoid reading and writing in the classroom. One learns to speak by speaking.

3. Keep a rapid pace. Don't allow time for students to translate. Tension promotes rapid learning.

4. Use an eclectic approach, Don't assume that all students learn the same way. There are many learning modes.

5. Draw upon the existing knowledge of the students.

6. Direct the lessons to information that is relevant to the students' experiences and educational or professional goals.

ESL Classrooms Today

Because ESL is a new field of research and instruction, relatively few universities offer degrees in ESL: only 18 offer bachelor's degrees, 65 offer master's degrees, and eight give doctorates. Most ESL practitioners teaching in public schools or in military programs do not have degrees in ESL. Most taught elementary school or high school English and moved into ESL teaching. They received on-the-job training or adapted the methods that they used in teaching other subjects to the teaching of ESL.

As a result, there is considerable variety in ESL teaching methods, but few teachers use the Situational Approach. In most cases, teachers use traditional approaches, emphasizing reading and writing, rather than speaking. Teachers often give explanations in the students' native language or lecture about English rather than requiring students to use English in the class. Teachers usually give writing assignments involving translation or sentence completion instead of creating active situations in the classroom where students can use the language. When teacher-student interaction takes place, it is usually on an individual basis, with the teacher questioning the students one by one, rather than involving the other students in the questioning. The pace is often a slow one; the teacher permits students to take as much time as they need to think of the correct responses, instead of moving rapidly from student to student until a correct response is made and then having the students respond in various ways to reinforce the correct statement.

ESL Teaching. The teaching of ESL requires a great deal of energy on the part of the teacher to keep the pace moving, to create tension in the classroom, and to keep changing techniques. Advocates of the Situational Approach recommend against using textbooks in class and suggest that teachers create situations in the classroom in which students can use the language. (They recommend that textbooks be used outside of class for study and preparation for classroom activities.) They suggest that teachers:

1. conduct role playing sessions in which students are assigned parts to play,
2. plan simulations of experiences students may encounter,
3. take the students outside of the classroom to real life situations where they will hear the language being used and where they can use it,
4. use objects, films, or other materials to make the subject more real to the students,
5. bring English speakers to the classroom to talk to the students, and
6. arrange for the students to speak in small groups with native English speakers.

The Situational Approach in the Classroom. One of the major differences between Situational ESL activities and traditional ESL activities is that a prepared text is not always available nor relevant to the students' needs or interests; situational activities build on students' past or future experiences. (The ERIC Clearing House on Languages and Linguistics does have lists available of bibliographies and practical guides of Situational classroom activities.) Often, preparation of class activities takes place at the beginning of the term, instead of before the term begins. For example, the teacher might ask the students to submit a list of their experiences, goals, or future needs for using English. The teacher then develops lists of language structures which will be needed by the students in those situations. Into a list of language structures, the teacher integrates sequentially-prepared grammar points and relevant vocabulary words. These lists of words, structures, and points are presented to the students for home study. Rather than telling the students to memorize the lists, the teacher encourages the students to meet together in small groups, to talk to each other, using the structures and words. Class time is then reserved for active use of the language structures and vocabulary words in situations created by the teacher, or for taking students outside of the class to hear and use the language in real-life situations.

For soldiers taking ESL during basic training, the teachers might begin their planning of the course by identifying critical situations in which the soldiers will be engaged during basic training. The planners would then select basic grammar points (e.g., present tense, gender agreement, use of articles) and choose the appropriate situations in which to present these points (e.g., a visit to the dental clinic, where the soldier describes symptoms and receives a prescription for care, might be an appropriate lesson in which to teach the present tense.) The planners might then develop lists of vocabulary words and language structures typically used in each of the critical situations, emphasizing that while certain structures would be offensive in a particular setting, they might be considered appropriate in a military setting. (Such structures as, "Pass the salt, put the tray over there, your fork's on the floor," might be considered impolite in other settings, but appropriate for use in the mess hall.)

These lists of grammar points and language structures could be distributed to the students on a daily basis for evening study. However, the assignment of homework is not a requirement for learning the vocabulary, grammar points, and structures; their use would be demonstrated by the teacher during classes. For example, the teacher could invite a guest speaker to the class to present a short lecture and demonstration (using realia) about the dental clinic. This controlled use of the the vocabulary, structures, and grammar points would serve as a model for the students of the appropriate language to use in situations relevant to their military experiences. Following the lecture, the teacher could ask the students questions about the subjects discussed in the lecture. The teacher would use the grammar points, structures and vocabulary during the questioning period. Then the teacher could call upon the students to divide into pairs and to discuss the subject using the realia. The teacher could then set up a simulated setting for the students and have them act out the situation discussed. While each selected group of students acts out the situation, the observing students would be encouraged to add their comments or interject words or structures. In addition, the teacher would continually use the grammar points, structures, and words in guiding the simulations. The teacher could also have several simulations occurring at the same time, to encourage the maximum amount of participation by students.

These and other activities of this type in the ESL classroom encourage maximum interaction and participation by the students, help to use time efficiently, keep students alert, attentive, and receptive, and present students with subject matter and language pertinent to their needs. If ESL is presented in this way, the language and the subject matter become an integral part of each other, rather than separate and unrelated areas of study.

CHAPTER III. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

In the next three chapters, we address three questions about the students in the BSEP I/ESL programs. (1) Who are they? (2) What are their attitudes toward and perceptions of the programs? and (3) How do they do in the programs? We have three sources of information to answer these questions.

- the TRADOC data base covering 2804 enrollees and 1679 eligible non-enrollees from FY79 to FY81,
- student questionnaires from more than 500 students who were in the programs during AIR's observation period (1981-1982), and
- pre- and post-training oral proficiency interviews with a small sample (N=33) of students in the program during AIR's observation period.

Variables Discussed in this Chapter

We describe six student variables: numbers of students, students' primary language group, their education level, their entry ECL level, several measures of prior exposure to English, and the military component in which students are enlisted. We first look at figures for ESL as a whole. We show how ESL enrollees are distributed over each variable, compare them with non-enrolled ESL eligibles where the data are available, and discuss implications of these results for the requirements of the course and the impact of the program. At the end of the chapter, we describe how the individual posts differ on these variables.

The ESL Population Across all Posts

Numbers. According to TRADOC data, the local ESL programs enroll between 800 and 1100 students per year. As shown in Table 3-1, there were 903 enrollees in FY79, 1094 enrollees in FY80, and 807 enrollees in FY81.*

---

*These figures are conservative approximations of the total enrollment during these years, since they represent only those records sent to TRADOC (DA Form 1821-2-R).

TABLE 3-1

Enrollment of the ESL Programs[1]

(Source: TRADOC)

FY	No. Enrollees	Enrollees as Percentage of Eligibles (Enrollees + Non-Enrollees)
79	903	
80	1094	
81	807	
Total[2]	2804	62.5% (2804/4483)

---

[1] Based only on student records actually submitted to TRADOC (excludes at least one major program during the FY79-81 period).

[2] This total is 20 cases lower than in the data base used to calculate ECL gains (Table 5-1), which shows a total of 2824, with most additions in FY81. (The English Comprehension Level test (ECL or ECLT) involves reading and listening to English. The test has been standardized by DLI.)

Many ESL eligibles are not enrolled in the programs. (ESL eligibles are non-native speakers with entry ECLs of less than 70). By analysis of the TRADOC data base, enrollees represented only 63 percent of all ESL eligibles during FY79-81 (Table 3-1).

Primary language group. Most students in the local programs are Spanish-speaking: 92 percent of the TRADOC data base. By far the majority of these are insular Puerto Ricans (IPR)--83 percent of all students during FY79-81; the rest are either Non-insular Puerto Ricans (NIPR, most from New York City), Mexican Americans, or Spanish speakers from various Central and South American countries--5 percent, 1 percent, and 3 percent respectively in FY79-81. Table 3-2 presents these data.

Koreans and Filipinos are the most prominent of the non-Spanish language groups--3 percent and 1 percent, respectively, of all students enrolled during FY79-81. Others represented in total only 3.4 percent of enrollees. Less than one percent of the FY79-81 enrollees belonged to any one of the other groups represented during this period: Vietnamese, other Asiatic, and various European languages.

Primary language is also included in the data from the AIR sample. The distribution of these enrollees by language group varies only slightly from the distribution of the TRADOC sample. Most noticeably, the proportion of Koreans increases to eight percent and Filipinos to four percent in the AIR sample, while the proportion of insular Puerto Ricans drops to 71 percent. Thus the total proportion of Spanish speakers is also less: 86 percent of the AIR sample.

We can compare the different language groups in terms of how many ESL eligibles in each group become enrolled in the programs. According to the TRADOC data, 65 percent of insular Puerto Rican and 66 percent of Korean eligibles enrolled in ESL during FY79-81. These percentages are somewhat higher than the proportions of eligibles in other language groups: 55 percent of NIPRs, 55 percent of other Spanish speakers, 45 percent of Filipinos, and only 31 percent of Mexican Americans who were eligible actually enrolled in BSEP I/ESL (Table 3-2).

Education level. The BSEP I/ESL students are well educated. Seventy-five percent of ESL students enrolled during FY79-81 had completed at least high school (or the

TABLE 3-2

Percent of ESL Enrollees in Each Primary Language Group During FY79-81

(Source: TRADOC)

Language Group	Enrollees	Enrollees as Percentage of Eligibles (Enrollees + Non-Enrollees)	
Spanish Speaking			
Insular P.R.	83.1 (2329)	65.4	(2329/3557)
Non-Insular P.R.	5.3 (149)	55.1	(149/270)
Other Spanish	3.1 (86)	55.1	(86/156)
Mexican American	.9 (26)	30.6	(26/85)
(Total Spanish)	92.4 (2590)	63.7	(2590/4068)
Non-Spanish-Speaking			
Miscellaneous Groups	3.4 (97)	45.9	(97/211)
Korean	2.8 (78)	66.1	(78/118)
Filipino	1.4 (39)	45.3	(39/86)
(Total Non-Spanish)	7.6 (214)	51.6	(214/415)
Total	100.0 (2804)	62.5	(2804/4483)

equivalent).* Ninety-six percent completed at least the 10th grade. By contrast, only 48 percent of BSEP eligibles as a whole in FY79-81--literacy plus ESL eligibles (n=15,642)--completed high school, and 86 percent completed at least the 10th grade. These proportions are presented in Table 3-3. The TRADOC data ignore education levels beyond high school.

Education levels of ESL students in the AIR sample are higher than those of the FY79-81 students: 91 percent of the questionnaire respondents indicated they had completed high school. Furthermore, when asked about education beyond high school, 29 percent of respondents said they had attended a four-year college and nine percent said they had graduated. (These colleges were outside the U.S. for over 99% of respondents.)

Entry ECL. ESL students appear widely distributed over low (0-29), middle (30-49), and high (50-69) ranges of entry ECLs, with slightly more middle than low scorers, and more low than high scorers. As shown in Table 3-4, taken from the TRADOC data base, 42% of FY79-81 enrollees had middle-range entry scores, 35% low, and 24% high scores. The mean entry ECL for FY79-81 as a whole was 38.0. This mean varies negligibly by fiscal year: from 37.8 (for both FY79 and FY80) to 38.6 (FY81).

Of the total number of ESL eligibles--those with entry ECLs of less than 70--proportionately more low and middle scorers were enrolled in ESL than high scorers. However, the skewing is less than we might expect. Only 69% of low-ECL eligibles and 66% of middle-ECL eligibles were enrolled in the FY79-81 programs, while 51% of high-ECL eligibles were enrolled (Table 3-4). This leaves nearly 1/3 of eligibles with low and middle scores who were not enrolled in ESL.

Of the non-enrolled eligibles with low and middle ECLs, many were enlisted in the military components for which BSEP is optional, as we might predict. In a later section, we will show that the National Guard, in comparison with the Regular Army, has much higher proportions of low and middle-range eligibles who do not go to ESL (see "Military Component").

The distribution of the different language groups over entry ECL ranges varies. Considering ESL enrollees during

---

*Eighty-six percent completed the 12th grade--whether graduated or not.

TABLE 3-3

Percent of ESL and BSEP Enrollees Attaining Each of Two Education Levels (Source: TRADOC)[1]

Education Level	Enrollees ESL	 BSEP
10th Grade	95.8 (2688/2804)	86.2 (13467/15642)
High School (or equivalent)	75.1 (2106/2804)	47.8 (7476/15642)

---

[1] BSEP enrollees include ESL plus literacy enrollees.

TABLE 3-4

Percent of Enrollees in Each Entry
ECL Range (FY79-81)

(Source: TRADOC)

Entry ECL Range	Enrollees	Enrollees as Percentage of Eligibles (Enrollees + Non-Enrollees)
0-29	34.5	69.1
(n)	(968)	(968/1401)
30-49	41.5	65.9
(n)	(1164)	(1164/1765)
50-69	24.0	51.0
(n)	(672)	(672/1317)
Total	100.0	62.5
	(2804)	

(Mean ECL=38.0)

FY79-81, shown in Table 3-5 (extracted from the TRADOC data), we find that IPRs scored lower than any other language group and that Filipinos scored higher: 37% of IPRs scored in the 0-29 range, compared with no Filipinos. Also, only 20% of IPRs scored in the high, 50-69 range, compared with 67% of Filipinos. As Table 3-5 further shows, a clear division occurs between lower-scoring language groups and higher-scoring groups. The high-scoring groups are Filipinos, Mexican-Americans, "other" Spanish speakers, and Koreans; the low-scoring groups are Puerto Ricans, both insular and non-insular.

Considering ESL eligibles as a whole, also shown in Table 3-5, we find the direction of these relationships little different. Thus, the language groups do not differ radically in the proportions of enrolled eligibles in each ECL range. In general, (1) these proportions vary from 45-77% in each language group, and (2) the proportions enrolled from the low and middle ECL ranges outweigh those from the high range.* (Table 3-5 presents the proportion of enrolled eligibles in each ECL category for each language group.)

Note that, except for the Koreans, the language groups in which eligibles score lower are also those with the highest proportions of enrolled eligibles (IPRs, NIPRs), while the groups that score higher are those with the lowest proportions of enrolled eligibles (Mexican-Americans, Filipinos). This is a predictable correspondence, given that soldiers with low ECLs are more likely to go to ESL than soldiers with high ECLs (as shown in Table 3-5).**

Prior exposure to English. We can glean some information on students' experience and skills in English before enrolling in the ESL program from the attitude questionnaires. In the questionnaires, we sought information to answer questions such as these: Did students have any prior knowledge of English? Did students know more English in some modes than others? Which modes? Where had students

---

*These are two exceptions to this generalization--Mexican-Americans and Koreans. Because the numbers for these groups are small and extremely variable across ECLs, the differences are unreliable and hard to interpret.

**Note that, as Table 3-5 shows, Koreans are the only group in which low ECLs are enrolled in smaller proportions than high ECLs.

TABLE 3-5

Percent of FY 79-81 Enrollees and Eligibles in Each ECL Range by Primary Language Group (Source: TRADOC)

Language Group	Enrollees				Eligibles				Enrollees as a Percentage of Eligibles			
	0-29	30-49	50-69	TOTAL	0-29	30-49	50-69	TOTAL	0-29	30-49	50-69	TOTAL
Insular Puerto Rican	37.0 (866)	43.0 (998)	20.0 (465)	100 (2329)	34.7 (1233)	41.4 (1464)	23.9 (850)	100 (3547)	70.2 (866/ 1233)	68.2 (998/ 1464)	54.7 (465/ 850)	65.4 (2319/ 3547)
Non-Insular Puerto Rican	31.6 (47)	33.5 (50)	34.9 (52)	100 (149)	25.6 (69)	31.1 (84)	43.3 (117)	100 (270)	68.1 (47/69)	59.5 (50/84)	44.4 (52/ 117)	55.2 26/105)
Mexican American	15.4 (4)	38.5 (10)	46.1 (12)	100 (26)	12.4 (13)	29.5 (31)	58.1 (61)	100 (105)	30/8 (4/13)	32.2 (10/31)	19.7 (12/61)	24.8 (26/105)
Other Spanish	16.3 (14)	30.2 (26)	53.5 (46)	100 (86)	16.1 (25)	29.4 (46)	54.5 (85)	100 (156)	56.0 (14/25)	56.5 (26/46)	54.1 (46/85)	55.1 (86/156)
Korean	12.8 (10)	42.3 (33)	44.9 (35)	100 (78)	15.2 (18)	37.3 (44)	47.5 (56)	100 (118)	55.5 (10/18)	75.0 (33/44)	62.5 (35/56)	66.1 (78/118)
Filipino	0 (0)	33.3 (13)	66.7 (26)	100 (39)	3.5 (3)	30.2 (26)	66.3 (57)	100 (86)	0 (0/3)	50.0 (13/26)	45.6 (26/57)	45.3 (39/86)

obtained this knowledge? How did the amount or type of prior experience relate to the levels and modes of students' knowledge?

We will display the information we received by indicating on a sample questionnaire the percentages of answers in each response category for each relevant item. The relevant items from the questionnaire appear in Table 3-6.

All students in the AIR sample indicated they had some prior knowledge of English. (That is, all respondents indicated that the question, "If you knew some English before you joined the Army, where did you learn it?" applied to them.) When asked to rate their prior knowledge of English on a four-point scale in each language mode, only small percentages reported that they knew no English at all in a given mode before joining the Army. More respondents indicated gaps in speaking and listening (10% and 11% respectively said "none at all") than in reading and writing. Only two percent of the sample reported no reading ability in English. (The ratings students gave themselves for each mode are shown in Q 4-7 of Table 3-6).

How much prior knowledge did students report they had? On the 4-point rating scale, over half the students in the questionnaire sample--56%--indicated they could read English "OK" to "very well" before joining the Army. By contrast, the percentages who judged themselves as speaking or understanding English "OK" to "very well" were much lower--24% and 30% respectively (Q 4-7, Table 3-6). These self-ratings agree with what we heard from teachers and drill sergeants who deal with ESL students: these students are better prepared in the written modes than in the oral modes.

Where had students learned what English they knew? Respondents were given a choice of four sources: school, job, home, and "other" (to be specified by the student). Eighty-four percent marked school (Q 9, Table 3-6). The school experience probably accounts for the apparent reading-writing bias in students' self-rated knowledge of English. Indeed, nearly half the respondents who named school as the source of their English said their teachers used the native language (rather than English) to teach English. This practice is characteristic of the grammar-translation model of language instruction and has been demonstrated to hinder the growth of oral skills (see Chapter Two, "ESL Techniques"). The more orally-based sources

TABLE 3-6

Distribution of Responses on Selected Items About Students' Backgrounds from the AIR Student Questionnaire[1]

(Source: AIR)

4. Before you joined the Army, when people spoke to you in English, how well did you understand them?

very well	6%
OK	24
poorly	60
not at all	10

5. How well did you speak English before you joined the Army?

very well	3%
OK	21
poorly	63
not at all	11

6. How well did you read English before you joined the Army?

very well	10%
OK	46
poorly	42
not at all	2

---

[1] Percentages in each response category are based on the number of respondents who answered the question. Missing answers ranged from 1-22% of the total possible responses for each question.

TABLE 3-6
(Cont'd.)

7. How well did you write English before you joined the Army?

very well	7%
OK	29
poorly	57
not at all	7

9. If you knew some English before you joined the Army, where did you learn it?

school	84%
job	10
home	6
other	(12% checked in addition to above category)

10. If you learned English in school, how many years of English classes did you have? (84% say 5 years or more)

Which language did your teachers use the most to teach the classes?

English	50%	(8% "both")
Native Language	42	

11. Did you use English before you joined the Army?

No	51%
Yes	49 (37%, excluding those who said "school")

In what situations? (Jobs mentioned by 51% of those who said "yes;" private

With whom? or public conversation mentioned by 75%)

TABLE 3-6
(Cont'd.)

12. Are there or were there people who spoke English in your family?

No 34%

Yes 66

Who? (siblings mentioned by 48%, fathers by 39%)

13. Did you live in the United States before you joined the Army?

No 58%

Yes 42 (36% at least 6 months)

For how many years? (55% between 6 months and 3 years)

Where? New York:62%; Calif.:15%; Hawaii:13%; New Jersey:5%; other states:5%.

What were you doing? working: 52%; school: 27%; native: 14%; visiting: 7%

of language knowledge--jobs and home--accounted for only 10% and 6% of the responses, respectively (Q 9, Table 3-6). (In addition to one of the above categories, 12% of the respondents marked "other" and specified this category as friends, tourists, streets, or Camp Santiago.)

Respondents who indicated school as the source of their English were asked how many years they had studied the language (Q 10, Table 3-6). The responses reveal a more extensive classroom exposure than might be expected, given that respondents still need ESL: 84% of those who learned English in school and who answered this question reported at least five years of English classes; and 70% reported at least nine years. More than any other single time period, students clustered at 12 years of English-- reported by 29% of respondents. Twelve years is the amount of English instruction normally required by the public schools in Puerto Rico. In fact, a breakdown of the number of years respondents studied English by the primary language of respondents reveals that the Spanish speakers account for most of the 12-year students. Spanish speakers cluster at 12-14 years of English (53% of all Spanish); Koreans at 6-10 years (81% of Koreans); and Filipinos at 4-8 years (54%, with 18% at 12 years).

Thus the Spanish speakers in our sample apparently received more formal schooling in English than did other groups. However, as we saw in the section on "Entry ECLs," above, Spanish speakers in general--and in particular insular Puerto Ricans--score lower on the ECLT than do other language groups. This fact suggests that the amount of schooling non-native speakers receive in English in their native countries may be little indication of how much English they know.

What experience had students had with English outside of school? We asked a series of questions to probe this experience. First, we asked whether respondents had "used English" before joining the Army. Thirty-seven percent said they had--excluding those who specified "school" as the place they had used English (an additional 12% of respondents) (Q 11, Table 3-6). Over half of those who answered "yes" described their jobs (51%) as one place they had used English. Three-quarters described one or more of a variety of free or structured conversational contexts, including helping visitors and tourists, playing sports, or talking with friends or neighbors. Only 5% specifically mentioned home as a place they had used English. (This question was open-ended, as shown in Table 3-6; therefore respondents varied both in how they categorized uses of English and in how many catgories they named.)

A second question to probe out-of-school experience was whether anyone in the respondent's family spoke English. Sixty-six percent answered "yes" (Q 12, Table 3-6). The significance of these responses is uncertain, however, especially since responses to the previous question suggest that respondents rarely used English at home. In this second question, respondents apparently included anyone in the family who knew English--e.g., family members who have had English classes in school. Nearly half (48%) of those who said "yes" named a sibling as one of the English speakers in the family. About 2/5 (39%) named the father and 1/5 (21%) the mother. About 1/3 (31%) named more distant relatives. (Again, respondents sometimes listed more than one relative.)

A third question was whether the respondent had lived in the U.S. before joining the Army (Q 13, Table 3-6). Thirty-six percent said they had lived in the U.S. for at least 6 months (an additional 6% had lived in the U.S. for less than 6 months). The average stay seems to be a couple of years: 55% of those who said "yes" reported they had lived in the U.S. for less than 3 years. Only 10% reported living in the U.S. for over 10 years. When asked what they were doing in the U.S., respondents said "working" twice as often as "going to school," and "school" twice as often as "I live here" (14%). New York was named four times as often as any other state in answer to "where were you living?" California and Hawaii were the next most frequent responses.

We looked at a breakdown by native language for the three "out-of-school experience" questions: use of English, English speakers in family, and years living in the U.S. The Koreans and Filipinos in our sample were each at least twice as likely as the Spanish speakers to report using English before joining the Army. The Filipinos (78%) were more likely than the Puerto Ricans (65%) to report that someone in their family speaks English, and the NIPRs (75%) were more likely than the IPRs ([illegible]%) to report this. Finally, by far more Filipinos (82%) and Koreans (78%) than Spanish (29%) indicated they had lived in the U.S. for at least 6 months before joining the Army. (Since NIPR Spanish are more likely to be U.S. residents, the proportion of IPR Spanish who had lived in the U.S. is probably much smaller than 29%).

In short, Spanish speakers, and IPRs in particular, are less likely than other language groups to have encountered English in the compelling out-of-the-classroom contexts that might provide a head start in learning English in the Army. The Spanish speakers have had more English in school than other groups, but the English they learn appears to be primarily a written form often taught in the native language. These factors may help explain why, among ESL eligibles, Spanish speakers--and IPRs in particular--score proportionately lower on entry ECL than do other groups.

Military component. The majority of ESL students are enlisted in the regular Army (RA): 72 percent of the FY79-81 enrollees, according to TRADOC data. Less than a third as many are in the National Guard (NG): 21 percent of the FY79-81 enrollees. A small fraction are in Enlisted Reserves (ER): seven percent in FY79-81. Table 3-7 shows these data.

Spanish-speaking students are more dominant in the NG and ER components than in the RA. While they comprised 91% of the RA enrollees during FY79-81 (TRADOC data), they accounted for 97% of the NG and 95% of the ER. Complementing this increase, the proportion of Korean and Filipino enrollees during FY79-81 drops from 4% to 2% respectively in the RA, to no Koreans in either NG or ER and less than 1% Filipinos in the NG. Among Spanish-speakers, NIPRs are proportionately more prevalent in the NG (11%) than they are in ER (2%) or RA (4%).

Compared with enrollees, the total population of ESL eligibles contains a higher percentage of NG. As shown in Table 3-7, NG accounted for 31% and RA for 63% of the FY79-81 eligibles. Thus, proportionately fewer NG eligibles are being enrolled in ESL than are RA and ER eligibles: while the programs enrolled 71% of RA eligibles and 72% of ER eligibles during FY79-81 they enrolled only 43% of NG eligibles. It appears that many NGs exercise their option to bypass BSEP/ESL--an option that RAs do not have.

What about the entry ECLs of ESL eligibles? Do NGs tend to have higher scores on the average, justifying their disproportionate absence from ESL? Table 3-8 shows this is not the case. NGs achieve no higher distribution of scores than do RA eligibles and in fact tend to score somewhat lower--the proportions of low, middle and high scores were 34%, 40%, and 26% for NG; 31%, 39%, and 30% for RA. Furthermore, NGs who score low are still enrolled at much lower rates than RAs who score low: 78% of RA low scorers,

TABLE 3-7

Percent of Enrollees and Eligibles in Each Military Component (Source: TRADOC)

Military Component[1]	Enrollees	Eligibles (Enrolled & Non-Enrolled)	Enrollees as a Percentage of Eligibles
RA	72.3(%)	63.4(%)	71.3(%)
(n)	(2029)	(2846)	(2029/2846)
NG	20.8	30.6	42.5
(n)	(583)	(1371)	(583/1371)
ER	6.8	5.9	72.2
(n)	(192)	(266)	(192/266)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	62.5
	(2804)	(4483)	(2804/4483)

---

[1] RA= Regular Army, NG = National Guard, ER = Enlisted Reserves

and 75% of RA middle scorers were enrolled in FY79-81, compared with 50% and 44% of NGs in these categories (Table 3-8). We should point out that, while NGs score somewhat lower than RAs, NGs from Puerto Rico should be better prepared than RAs, since most of them (we do not know what proportion) have up to 12 weeks of ESL at the training academy at Camp Santiago.

Turning to the questionnaire sample, we find the proportions of the AIR sample in each military component varies somewhat from the FY79-81 population: RA drops to 65% and NG rises to 27%. We have no corresponding data on eligibles for this period.

Summary and Implications of Background Characteristics

The local ESL programs receive a relatively well-educated group of soldiers who are largely homogeneous in primary language and nationality--most are Spanish speakers (92% FY79-81), and the great majority of these are insular Puerto Ricans. All students have had some prior exposure to English, according to their own reports--largely through school English classes in their native countries or territories. Though the classroom experience appears to be extensive, it clearly does not provide the basic language skills needed to pass the ECLT or to stay in BT without referral to BSEP. What the classroom experience seems to do is teach some reading. Almost all the AIR sample say they can read at least a little English; on the average, they say they speak and understand much less than they can read.

Students are highly diverse in language proficiency--their entry ECLs are widely distributed over low, middle, and high ECL ranges, with somewhat more scores in the middle and low ranges. The majority of students--72% in FY79-81--are enlisted in the RA; most of the rest are NG.

Since 1979, the programs have consistently excluded nearly 40% of ESL eligibles per year. As expected, the excluded eligibles fall more into the high ECL range than into the middle or low. Nevertheless, fully one-third of the eligibles with middle-range scores and nearly that proportion with low scores do not go to ESL. NG soldiers, for whom ESL is optional, account for proportionately more of the exclusions (57% are not enrolled) than do RA soldiers (29% are not enrolled), despite the fact that NG soldiers score no higher ECLs than do RA soldiers.

TABLE 3-8

Percent of Enrollees in Each Entry ECL Range
by Regular Army (RA) vs. National Guard (NG)
(Source: TRADOC)

Military Component	Entry ECL 0-29	 30-49	 50-69	 TOTAL
RA	31.1%	38.9%	30.0%	100.0%
(n)	(629)	(791)	(609)	(2029)
(as % of eligibles)	(78%)	(75%)	(59%)	
NG	34.0%	39.9%	26.1%	100.0%
(n)	(198)	(233)	(152)	(583)
(as % of eligibles)	(50%)	(44%)	(31%)	

The findings about non-enrolled eligibles have implications for the effectiveness of the screening mechanisms that link local programs to soldiers. The clearest implication is that these mechanisms may be inefficient since, in significant numbers, they filter in soldiers with fewer needs and filter out those with greater needs.

In addition, the following student characteristics have implications for the effectiveness of the ESL programs themselves: homogeneous primary language groups, mixed proficiency levels, and poor speaking-listening skills. First, students will have difficulty picking up English outside the classroom, since most can rely on their Spanish. (We present data on how much students use English outside of class under "Attitudes and Perceptions.") Second, programs that do not deliberately group students by ECL (as most do not) will have widely mixed classes and lessons that are often inappropriate for significant proportions of a class. Third, the reading-writing instruction prevalent in the programs will not meet students' perceived needs. (We will elaborate more on this point under "Attitudes and Perceptions".)

Breakdown of Student Characteristics by Program

We examined the student background data from TRADOC in terms of individual programs.* For certain of the variables discussed above, we found differences among programs that are large and readily interpretable.

Numbers. According to the TRADOC data base, seven out of the 15 posts with BSEP I/ESL programs in FY79-81 enrolled over 100 ESL students in all during those years. Table 3-9 shows the seven programs in order of size, given as the number of enrollees over the three fiscal years, FY79-81.

---

*We are excluding data from the AIR questionnaire as an indication of program differences on the major variables for which we have TRADOC data. The principal reason for this exclusion is that the number of questionnaire respondents is highly variable among programs and is for some programs quite small. The TRADOC data provide more reliable measures of program differences on the demographic features of interest in this section. However, we will use the questionnaire data to probe program differences in the section on "Students' Attitudes and Perceptions."

The total for these seven programs (n=2577) represents 92% of the entire student population in local ESL programs during FY79-81, as recorded by TRADOC (n=2804). It is clear that the 7 major programs varied widely in size, from a high of 575 enrollees at Ft. Benning during FY79-81 to a low of 161 at Ft. Leonard Wood.

TABLE 3-9
Enrollment and Percentage of Enrolled Eligibles for the Seven Largest ESL Programs During FY79-81*

Post	FY79-81 ESL enrollees	Percent Enrolled Eligibles
BENNING	575	41.4
SILL	466	85.7
KNOX	461	52.6
DIX	398	100.0
GORDON	277	97.2
BLISS	239	92.6
LEONARD WOOD	161	75.9
TOTAL	2577	

In addition to the seven installations listed in Table 3-9, Ft. Jackson also had a sizable program during FY79-81; but enrollment data on this program had not been submitted to TRADOC at the time of this analysis. Ft. Bliss stopped receiving soldiers for BT in 1981, resulting in a drop in BSEP I/ESL enrollment. Note that the major local programs after FY81--those we observed for this report--are the same ones found during FY79-81, with the addition of Ft. Jackson and the exclusion of Ft. Bliss.

---

*As noted earlier, the TRADOC figures probably underestimate the actual enrollment at each post.

The percentage of ESL eligibles enrolled at each post also varies widely, as shown in Table 3-9: from only 41% enrolled eligibles at Ft. Benning during FY79-81 to 97% at Ft. Gordon and 100% at Ft. Dix.* The lowest proportion of enrollees next to Ft. Benning was at Ft. Knox, with 52% enrolled eligibles; the highest proportion next to Ft. Gordon was at Ft. Bliss with 93% enrolled eligibles. If these figures are valid, then we must conclude that Ft. Benning and Ft. Knox--the first and third largest programs during FY79-81--were primarily responsible for the low percentage (63%) of enrolled eligibles observed across posts during FY79-81 (see previous section).

Except for Ft. Benning (which we will discuss below), the variable of enrolled eligibles does not correlate with either the proportion of NG or ER eligibles at each post or the proportion of low vs. high ECLs at each post. We may hypothesize that the effectiveness of the BSEP screening system accounts for most of the difference in enrolled eligibles, or that differences in the discretion that commanders have to send or not to send soldiers to ESL may account for some of the difference. In the case of Benning, there may be both demographic and screening factors at work: Ft. Benning has the highest percentage of NG among its eligible population of all the local programs (Table 3-10 below), which doubtlessly diminishes the likelihood of enrolling eligibles, since BSEP is optional for NG. Ft. Benning also assigns incoming soldiers to units before BSEP testing, which allows unit commanders to veto ESL for the eligibles in their units. Both factors may contribute to the unusually low proportions of eligibles enrolled in ESL at Ft. Benning during FY79-81. At Ft. Knox, however, NG comprises a very small proportion of the eligible population, so the low enrollment percentages may result mainly from the screening system.

Primary language. The proportion of students in different language groups varies somewhat among the local programs. Spanish speakers accounted for at least 89% of the FY79-81 enrollees in each of the seven major programs, as shown in Table 3-11. Only Ft. Sill enrolled a sizable percentage of NIPR (15% compared to <1%-7% elsewhere).

Koreans were clustered at Ft. Dix, Ft. Sill, and Ft. Knox, where they comprised between 3 and 5 percent of FY79-81 enrollees.

Education level. Students' education levels vary moderately among the local programs. The percentage of FY79-81 enrollees who had completed high school ranged from 62% to 87%, as shown in Table 3-11. The low extremes were Ft. Sill (62%) and Ft. Benning (68%); these two programs also had the high extremes of NIPRs (15% and 7% respectively). Thus it appears that NIPRs are less likely than IPRs to have graduated from high school. Finally, at least 92% of the enrollees at each post had completed the 10th grade or higher.

Entry ECL. The proportion of enrollees falling into low, middle, and high ranges of entry ECL varies moderately among local programs. This variable is shown in Table 3-12 for FY79-81. Looking at the shape of the distribution of ECLs, we find that the middle ECLs exceed the highs for every program, and that for no program do the highs exceed the lows by more than two percentage points.

Thus there are some obvious differences among programs in the balance of low and high ECLs. Are these differences due to different screening policies and procedures or to different ECL distributions among the eligible population at each post? At most posts it seems to be the latter factor. However, Ft. Benning enrolls eligibles with low ECL scores in much greater proportions than eligibles with high scores--and the differences between the two proportions is greater than at any other post. These relationships hold despite the fact that Ft. Benning has the highest percentage of NG eligibles (for whom BSEP is optional and who at best score no higher than other groups). It may be that in its screening system, Ft. Benning pursues those soldiers who score low and who are most in need of ESL more actively than do other posts.

TABLE 3-10

Percent of Enrollees and Eligibles in Each Military Component During FY79-81 by ESL Program

(Source: TRADOC)

	Enrollees				Eligibles				Enrollees as a Percentage of Eligibles			
PROGRAM	NG[1]	RA[1]	ER[1]	Total	NG	RA	ER	Total	NG	RA	ER	Total
Benning	38.4	60.7	.9	100.0	56.4	41.7	1.9	100.0	28.2	60.3	19.2	41.4
(n)	(221)	(349)	(5)	(575)	(783)	(579)	(26)	(1389)				
Gordon	26.4	54.9	18.8	100.0	27.6	53.9	18.5	100.0	90.3	98.6	98.2	96.9
(n)	(72)	(152)	(53)	(277)	(80)	(154)	(54)	(285)				
Knox	1.3	98.1	.7	100.0	4.6	94.9	.57	100.0	15.2	54.1	60.0	52.6
(n)	(6)	(452)	(3)	(461)	(40)	(831)	(5)	(876)				
Wood	18.6	55.9	25.5	100.0	22.6	50.9	26.4	100.0	61.2	83.4	72.0	75.9
(n)	(30)	(90)	(40)	(161)	(49)	(108)	(55)	(212)				
Dix	16.6	65.3	18.1	100.0	16.6	65.3	18.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(n)	(66)	(260)	(72)	(398)	(66)	(260)	(72)	(398)				
Sill	27.9	71.9	.2	100.0	36.0	62.7	1.3	100.0	66.2	98.2	13.7	85.7
(n)	(130)	(335)	(1)	(466)	(195)	(341)	(7)	(544)				
Bliss	.4	99.6	.0	100.0	.4	99.6	.0	100.0	100.0	92.6	.0	92.6
(n)	(1)	(238)	(0)	(239)	(1)	(257)	(0)	(258)				

---

[1] Military Component: NG = National Guard
RA = Regular Army
ER = Englisted Reserves

TABLE 3-11

Percent of Enrollees in Each Primary Language Group and at Two Education Levels, by Program

Program	Language Group							Education Level	
	IPR[1]	NIPR[1]	Mex.-Amer.	Other Spanish	Total Spanish	Korean	Filipino	High School	10th Grade
Benning	83.3	7.3	0.9	1.4	(92.9)	1.0	1.0	68.2	92.4
Gordon	91.3	0.7	1.1	2.5	(95.7)	0.7	1.8	78.7	94.2
Knox	89.2	0.4	0.9	2.6	(93.1)	3.3	0.4	79.0	97.4
Leonard Wood	87.0	1.2	1.2	5.0	(94.4)	1.9	0.6	82.6	96.9
Dix	82.9	3.0	1.5	5.3	(92.7)	4.5	1.3	86.7	98.0
Sill	68.7	15.5	0.4	4.9	(89.5)	4.3	2.6	62.0	94.9
Bliss	93.3	2.5	0.4	0.0	(96.2)	0.0	0.0	74.9	98.8

---

[1] IPR = Insular Puerto Rican
NIPR = Non-Insular Puerto Rican

Military component. There are considerable differences among programs in how students are distributed in the three military components. RAs accounted for between 55 and 71% of the FY79-81 enrollees at five of the seven programs; but for 98 and 99% of the enrollees at Ft. Knox and Ft. Bliss, respectively (Table 3-12). Similarly, NG accounted for between 17 and 38% of enrollees in the same five programs, but for only 1% or less at Ft. Knox and Ft. Bliss. Ft. Benning had the high extreme of NG, 38%--10% more than the next highest program. ER comprised either 18-25% of all enrollees (Ft. Gordon, Ft. Wood, and Ft. Dix) or less than 1% (Ft. Knox, Ft. Bliss, Ft. Benning, and Ft. Sill). Ft. Benning actually had more NG than RA among ESL eligibles, but enrolled the second smallest percentage of its NG eligibles (only 28%) of all the programs. Ft. Knox enrolled the lowest percentage of its NG eligibles (15%). It may be that these two posts differ from others in terms of screening procedures vis-a-vis NG eligibles. (In the case of Ft. Benning, we should note that the large size of the NG eligible population--it is almost four times larger than at the next highest post--may affect the proportion of NGs enrolled. In absolute numbers, Ft. Benning still enrolls considerably more NGs than any other program, Table 3-12.)

TABLE 3-12

Percent of FY 79-81 Enrollees and Eligibles in Each Entry ECL Range by ESL Program (Source: TRADOC)

	Enrollees				Eligibles				Enrollees as a Percentage of Eligibles			
Entry ECL:	0-29	30-49	50-69	TOTAL	0-29	30-49	50-69	TOTAL	0-29	30-49	50-69	TOTAL
PROGRAM												
Benning	41.6	40.9	17.5	100	32.1	39.3	28.6	100	53.6	43.0	25.4	41.4
(n)	(239)	(235)	(101)	(575)	(446)	(546)	(397)	(1389)	(239/ 446)	(235/ 546)	(101/ 397)	(575/ 1389)
Gordon	39.4	38.6	22.0	100	39.2	38.4	22.4	100	97.3	98.2	95.3	97.2
(n)	(109)	(107)	(61)	(277)	(112)	(109)	(64)	(285)	(109/ 112)	(107/ 109)	(61/ 64)	(277/ 285)
Knox	37.1	39.9	23.0	100	35.1	38.1	26.8	100	55.7	55.1	45.1	52.6
(n)	(171)	(184)	(106)	(461)	(307)	(334)	(235)	(876)	(171/ 307)	(184/ 334)	(106/ 235)	(461/ 876)
Wood	34.8	46.6	18.6	100	36.3	40.6	23.1	100	72.7	87.2	61.2	75.9
(n)	(56)	(75)	(30)	(161)	(77)	(86)	(49)	(212)	(56/ 77)	(75/ 86)	(30/ 49)	(161/ 212)
Dix	28.4	42.2	29.4	100	28.4	42.2	29.4	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(113)	(168)	(117)	(398)	(113)	(168)	(117)	(398)	(113/ 113)	(168/ 168)	(117/ 117)	(398/ 398)
Sill	28.8	39.9	31.3	100	28.7	39.9	31.4	100	85.9	85.7	84.2	85.7
(n)	(134)	(186)	(144)	(466)	(156)	(217)	(171)	(544)	(134/ 156)	(186/ 217)	(144/ 171)	(466/ 544)
Bliss	41.8	40.2	18.0	100	39.9	38.8	21.3	100	97.0	96.0	78.2	92.6
(n)	(100)	(96)	(42)	(239)	(103)	(100)	(55)	(258)	(100/ 103)	(96/ 100)	(43/ 55)	(239/ 258)

Implications for Future Planning. This section's implications for future planning of the Army's ESL program include the following:

- The 1831 data base would be more useful for regulating the status of ongoing events if it were monitored for missing data and displayed education levels beyond high school.
- Decisions concerning continuation of the ESL program should take into account the value of the exceptionally well educated ESL population to the Army.
- A system needs to be developed to deal with the unevenness of ESL enrollment across Army posts.
- Any comparison of enrolled RA ESL soldiers with unenrolled eligible RA soldiers should be viewed in the context of the superior English language ability shown by the unenrolled eligible soldiers.
- Future programs should emphasize speaking and understanding spoken English and de-emphasize training in reading and writing.

CHAPTER IV. STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

In general, soldiers liked the course. They believe the teachers care about them. They believe their English improves during the six weeks of the course. However, they still rate themselves as not proficient in speaking English; they think the courses should emphasize speaking more. On posts where soldiers are housed with English speaking soldiers, ESL students believe the other soldiers help them learn to speak English more than their teachers do. Most soldiers feel they do not have enough time to study and practice their English; most said they would study more if a time and place for it were available.

The information on attitudes and perceptions of ESL students comes from the questionnaires we administered to 500 students who were in classes during our visits to seven posts between December 1981 and March 1982. We visited each post at least twice, usually at a five-week interval. Our information, therefore, reflects a large proportion of the student population of the seven programs over the December 1981-March 1982 period.

We administered three versions of the same questionnaire. Students in their first week of classes received version one which asked about the students' language and education background. We call this version "pre" because students filled it out before training. Five weeks later, the same students received version two which asked about the students' experiences in ESL class and changes in English proficiency. Version two is called "post" because students filled it out after training.

All other students received version three. This version combined questions from the pre- and post-versions as appropriate. Students in every week of the program, including a few students who were just beginning ESL at our last visit, filled out the combined version. In all, 423 students completed the "combined" questionnaire. Seventy-seven filled out the "pre" questionnaire and 56 of the 77 also completed the "post" questionnaire.

We provided questionnaires written in either Spanish or English. Eighty-one percent of respondents chose the Spanish version. Students wrote their responses on the questionnaires.

In analyzing the questionnaire data, we pooled responses to questions on the "combined" version with responses to the corresponding questions on either the "pre" or "post" questionnaire. The pooled data provide an overall picture of the feelings and perceptions of students enrolled in ESL during the 12/81-3/82 period. We extracted four questions from the "pre" and four similar ones from the "post" to serve as a before-after comparison of program effects.

The questions we asked cluster into five areas: (1) how students perceive their ESL needs and what they want from the program, (2) how students perceive their progress in the program, (3) how students weigh the importance of classroom vs. out-of-classroom experiences in helping them learn English, (4) what students think about the classes: course, teachers, and curriculum, and (5) students' suggestions for making the program better. We will first look at the overall trend of the answers in each area, then at any salient differences in these trends among programs.

There is an important methodological note to the data on attitudes and perceptions. Particularly for the sections on "perceived progress" and "program characteristics as seen by students," length of time in the course can be an important influence on students' responses. Most results reported in these sections come from adding the responses on the "post" version of the questionnaire (n=56) with those on the "combined" version (n=423). (Results in the first section came from the "pre" plus "combined" version.) Respondents in the "combined" sample are distributed by week in the course such that the bulk fall into the second, third, and fourth weeks, with 57% in the first three weeks and 43% in the last three weeks. Thus there is a slight early bias in the "combined" sample. When we add the "post" sample (n=56) to the "combined" sample, the early-late distribution is nearly equal: 51% (first three weeks) and 49% (last three weeks).*

Attitudes and Perceptions Across All Programs

To show the results, we will present the percentages of answers in each response category on a sample questionnaire. This questionnaire appears as Table 4-1.

---

*Note that all programs are represented in the three questionnaire samples, with the exception of the small "pre" and "post" samples, which exclude Ft. Gordon. Ft. Gordon had too small an enrollment at the time of our visits to allow a pre-post comparison.

TABLE 4-1

Distribution of Responses on Selected Items About Attitudes and Perceptions from AIR Student Questionnaire[1]

(Source: AIR)

4. Before you joined the Army, when people spoke to you in English, how well did you understand them?

very well	6%
OK	24
poorly	60
not at all	10

5. How well did you speak English before you joined the Army?

very well	3%
OK	21
poorly	63
not at all	11

6. How well did you read English before you joined the Army?

very well	10%
OK	46
poorly	42
not at all	2

---

[1] Percentages in each response category are based on the number of respondents who answered the question. Missing answers ranged from 1-22% of the total possible responses for each question.

Results for questions 4-8 pool answers from soldiers who filled out the pre questionnaire with soldiers who filled out the combined questionnaire. Results for items 16-38 pool answers from the combined questionnaires and the post questionnaires. Item numbers are those for the "combined" version of the questionnaire, shown in full in the Appendix.

TABLE 4-1
(Cont'd.)

7. How well did you write English before you joined the Army?

very well	7%
OK	29
poorly	57
not at all	7

8. What do you want to improve in the most from this course? (Check one)

understanding spoken English	58%
reading English	3
speaking English	34
writing English	5

16. Since you joined the Army how much has your English improved? (Check one)

a little	61%	(43%, Post only)
a lot	31	(52, Post)
not at all	8	(5, Post)

17. If your English did not improve much, what was the main reason? (Check one)

the lessons were too difficult	6%	
the lessons were too easy	9	
the teachers didn't help me	5	
not enough time to study	38	
not enough chances to use English with English speaking people	20	
other reason	22	(no one reason predominates; includes "course is too short," "haven't been in classes long enough.")

TABLE 4-1
(Cont'd.)

18. What has improved the most for you? (Check one)

understanding spoken English	53%
writing English	5
speaking English	24
reading English	18

19. What did you improve in the most during the course? (Check one)

pronouncing English words	19%
spelling English words	3
making English sentences	10
learning more Army words	29
learning more English words	39

20. What helped you the most to improve your English? (Check one)

exercises in language lab	9%
exercises in class	25
talking to the teacher	26
talking to the drill sergeant	2
talking with English speaking soldiers	32
other answer	6

21. Who gave you the most encouragement to keep learning English? (Check one)

the drill sergeants	15%
the classroom teachers	38
other students in the course	17
others	30 ("self" accounts for half)

TABLE 4-1
(Cont'd.)

22. The course is

too difficult. 10%

too easy. 13

just right. 76

23. The course is

too long. 9%

too short. 45

the right length. 46

24. How are conditions in your classroom?

good for learning 79%

bad for learning 20

Why? ("Both" 1)

25. How do you feel about the way your teachers teach the course?

I like it 79%

I don't like it 18

Why? ("Both" 1)

26. Do your teachers

(Check each question)

help you to learn the lessons? Yes 93 No 7%

explain the lessons well? Yes 90 No 10

care if you are having problems learning? Yes 90 No 10

27. What would help you learn English better?

Students' Categories
- 59% - practicing outside class
- 20 - practicing (speaking) in class
- 9 - improve materials, labs, tests
- 8 - longer time in course
- 4 - other (eliminate math: Knox only)

TABLE 4-1
(Cont'd.)

28. Do you speak English when you are not in class?

Yes 85%

No 15

If you use English outside of class, do you use it

(Check each question)

during Army training? Yes 73 No 27%

with English speakers on the post? Yes 92 No 8

with other students after classes? Yes 62 No 38

in the city? Yes 29 No 71

other answer ______________________________

29. Do you think you need more chances to practice English? (Check each question)

in class Yes 85 No 15%

during Pre-BT Army training Yes 87 No 13

off-duty Yes 88 No 12

other places ______________________________

30. Do you ever study your English lessons in the barracks?

Yes 68 No 32%

Do you think you would study more if you had the time?

Yes 95 No 5%

TABLE 4- 1
(Cont'd.)

31. Do you feel that the English speakers on the post try to help you speak English?

Yes 62%

No 38

For example ____________________

____

32. Is your English good enough to do these things without a problem? (Check each question)

buy things at the PX	Yes 79	No 10	Don't know 11%
use the post office (for example, buy stamps)	Yes 77	No 12	Don't know 11
explain your problem at the dispensary	Yes 49	No 34	Don't know 17
use the telephone	Yes 80	No 12	Don't know 8
order a meal in a city	Yes 53	No 20	Don't know 17

33. What do you like the least about the language course? ____________________

	Nothing - 17% Content and Materials (written exercises, etc.) - 18%
Students'	Teaching (too fast, don't know Army) - 12% Not enough speaking - 11%
Categories	Course too short - 10% Not enough study time - 7%
	Other - (not enough stimulation, too much Math) - 25%

(NOTE: 22% did not answer this part)

TABLE 4-1
(Cont'd.)

34. What language does your drill sergeant use during training? (Check one)

always English 96%

sometimes Spanish 4

usually Spanish 0

other______________________________

35. Do you usually understand the sergeant when he or she talks to you in English?

Yes 66%

No 34

36. What do you do when you do not understand what the sergeant says?

Students' Categories	Use a translator (another soldier)	38%
	Ask to repeat slowly	30

37. Are you able to explain in English to the sergeant what the problem is when you don't understand what to do?

Yes 71%

No 29

38. Which language do you use more in your barracks at night?

English 32%

Native language 58

("Both" 10)

1. How students perceive their ESL needs and what they want from the program. Respondents on the "pre" and the "combined" versions of the questionnaire (N=77, N=423, respectively) were asked what language mode they most wanted to improve in the ESL course. The majority marked either speaking (34%) or understanding spoken English (58%). Only 3% marked reading and 5% writing English (Q 8, Table 4-1). Thus students at the start of and during the course want help primarily in oral skills and largely in oral comprehension. In describing students' backgrounds in the previous section, we reported that less than a third of the respondents rated themselves as speaking (24%) or understanding (30%) English "OK" to "very well" before joining the Army, compared with over half (56%) who rated themselves as reading English at the same level (Q 4-7, Table 4-1). Apparently, respondents want the program to focus where their perceived deficits are greatest. In addition, respondents seem to value some modes over others: understanding over speaking and both over writing. (They actually rated themselves only slightly higher in prior writing competence--36%--than in understanding spoken English--30%). The program focus desired by students corresponds to the language modes actually required for BT and most MOSs, according to the DLI's analyses: understanding generally predominates over speaking, speaking over reading, and reading over writing. (JLPRs, DLI 1980).

2. How students perceive their progress in the program. There are two ways to get a sense of how much progress students think they have made in English. First, we can look at how the "post" and "combined" respondents answered the direct question: "How much has your English improved since joining the Army?" (Joining the Army usually coincides with starting the program.) Sixty-one percent said "a little," 31% said "a lot," and 8% said "not at all" (Q 16, Table 4-1). As we would expect, these percentages vary moderately with students' time in the course--especially for the "not at all" responses, which are over three times as likely to have come from students in weeks 1-3 as from students in weeks 4-6. When we consider the "post" respondents alone (N=56)--all of whom were in their sixth week--we find that they see greater progress. Over half--52%--said "a lot," somewhat fewer--43%--said "a little," and 5% said "not at all." We find about the same proportions for the six-weekers in the "combined" sample (N=50): 48%, 48%, and 4%. We can infer that only a small fraction of students in ESL think they are making, or think they have made, no gains in English, and further, that by the end of the six-week course, about half the students sampled think they have gained a great deal.

A second way to look at how much progress students think they have made is less direct. We can compare the self-ratings of respondents on the "pre," or first-week questionnaire, with those of the same respondents on the "post," or six-week questionnaire. These ratings were made in each of the four language modes (Q 4-7). As shown in Tables 4-2/4-5, about 2/3 of the respondents who answered both "pre" and "post" questionnaires stayed at the same level of self-rated competence in each mode, about 1/3 improved by one level, and only 2% to 4% declined by one level. The exact percentages of change for each of the four language modes are shown beside each table. The location of the improvement varies somewhat across modes: The majority of the changes in each mode are from "poor" to "OK," but in reading and writing, a significant number of changes are from "OK" to "very good," since respondents started out rating themselves higher in the written than the oral modes on the "pre" questionnaire.

The self-ratings indicate that, in any one mode, only about 1/3 of the respondents assessed their abilities higher (on a four-point scale) at six weeks than they did at one week. But when we asked students whether they improved, 95% reported that they had.

We asked respondents on the "post" and the "combined" questionnaires to indicate in which of the four language modes they had improved or were improving the most (Q 18). The majority--53%--marked understanding spoken English. Twenty-four percent of the respondents marked speaking English and 19% marked reading. Only 5% marked writing. These proportions are unlikely to reflect the particular emphases of the curriculum, since in other questions respondents consistently indicated that the course had too little speaking and listening. It is more likely that students make--or feel they make--the highest gains where their deficits and desire for improvement are greatest--that is, in oral comprehension. Because students think their reading is already OK, they may not feel they benefit as much there as in listening or speaking.

What do the perceived improvements mean for the respondents? Where do they see themselves at the end of the course in terms of general language comprehension? Where do they see themselves in terms of ability to communicate in specific Army contexts? To answer the first question, we can look at the profiles of the "post" respondents on the self-ratings, shown in the column totals of Tables 4-2/4-5:

TABLE 4-2. Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre" for Understanding Spoken English

Rating Categories: POST

Rating Categories: PRE	Very well	OK	Poorly	Not at all	Total Post %
Very well	1	0	0	0	1 (2)
OK	1	14	0	0	15 (31)
Poorly	0	13	18	1	32 (65)
Not at all	0	0	1	0	1 (2)
Total Pre	2	27	19	1	49 (100)
%	(4)	(55)	(39)	(2)	(100)

TABLE 4-3. Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre" for Speaking English

Rating Categories: POST

Rating Categories: PRE	OK	Poorly	Not at all	Total Post	%
Very well	1	0	0	1	(2)
OK	12	0	0	12	(24)
Poorly	13	21	0	34	(68)
Not at all	0	1	2	3	(6)
Total Pre	26	22	2	50	(100)
%	(54)	(44)	(4)	(100)	

TABLE 4-4. Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre" for Reading English

Rating Categories: PRE	Very well	OK	Poorly	Total Post	%
	Rating Categories: POST				
Very well	4	2	0	6	(12)
OK	7	19	0	26	(52)
Poorly	0	10	7	17	(34)
Not at all	0	1	0	1	(2)
Total Pre	11	32	7	50	(100)
%	(22)	(64)	(14)	(100)	

TABLE 4-5: Self-Ratings on "Post" by Self-Ratings on "Pre" for Writing English

Rating Categories: PRE	Very well	OK	Poorly	Not at all	Total Post	%
	Rating Categories: POST					
Very well	2	0	0	0	2	(4)
OK	3	20	0	0	23	(46)
Poorly	0	9	11	1	21	(42)
Not at all	0	0	2	2	4	(8)
TOTAL Pre	5	29	13	3	50	(100)
%	(10)	(58)	(26)	(6)	(100)	

59% rated themselves as understanding spoken English, "OK" to "very well," 54% gave the same ratings for speaking English, 68% for writing, and 86% for reading. Thus at the end of the course, a little over half the students sampled felt fairly confident about oral skills, and considerably more felt confident about writing skills. By comparison, the profiles of "pre" respondents on the self-rating scales for each mode is shown in the row totals of Tables 4-2/4-5 (that is, the responses of those 56 out of the 77 "pre" respondents who also completed a "post" questionnaire): 33% rated themselves as understanding spoken English "OK" to "very well"; 26% gave the same ratings for speaking English; 64% for reading; and 50% for writing English. Compared with the prior ability ratings of the "pre" plus "combined" sample, given earlier--30%, 24%, 56%, and 36% for the four modes--the "pre" ratings alone are slightly higher. Thus, considering just the proportion of respondents who move into the top two ("OK" to "very good") categories of the rating scale, we find that from 20-25% made this shift for each mode between the first and sixth weeks of the course.

To answer the question of how students finishing the course see themselves in terms of situation-specific language ability, we can look at how the "post" respondents treated a series of "yes-no" items about communicating successfully in various Army contexts (Q 32). We find that respondents appear more confident when asked about specific situations than when asked to rank general language competence. Eighty-nine percent said they could usually understand the drill sergeant when he talks in English; 88% said their English was good enough to buy things at the PX without difficulty; 83% could use the post office without difficulty, and 93% could use the telephone. Thus at least 4/5 of the six-week students sampled felt confident about their Army-functional English in relatively predictable situations.

By comparison, students in the first through sixth weeks, in the "combined" sample, were somewhat less confident about their abilities in the same situations, by an average of 15 percentage points across situations: 66% said they could understand the sergeant, 79% could shop at the PX, 71% could use the post office, and 76% the telephone. Also, it is clear that respondents in the "combined" sample, like the "post' sample, rated themselves higher in specific language functions than in general competence in each language mode. The "pre" questionnaire did not include these questions.

3. How students weigh the importance of classroom and out-of-classroom experiences in helping them learn English. Several questions on the "post" and "combined" questionnaires sought students' judgments of how much English they encountered outside of class and how these encounters affected their acquisition of English. Students' responses point to the importance of out-of-class, contextual features over course and classroom features in the student's view of both what helps and what hinders learning English. Respondents who indicated that their English had not improved much were asked to decide which program feature was responsible. Out of a range of choices (see Table 4-1, Q 17) over half the respondents for whom this question was applicable chose a contextual feature rather than a feature of the course itself: "not enough time to study" was the most frequent response--38%; "not enough chances to use English with English speaking people" was the next most frequent--20%. Course features were chosen much less frequently: "the lessons were too easy" (9%), "the teachers didn't help me" (5%), and "the lessons were too difficult" (4%). The remaining respondents gave a range of "other" responses, the most prominent of which were "the course is too short" and "I haven't been in the course long enough" (5% each).

Respondents also chose a contextual feature when asked, "What helped you the most to improve your English?" (Q 20). The most frequent response was "talking with English speaking soldiers" (32%). "Talking to the teacher" got 26% of the responses and "exercises in class," 25%. By the end of the course, isolating the "post" respondents, we found that fully 2/3 of the respondents attributed their improvement to talking with English-speaking soldiers.

Other responses also show how important context is in students' acquisition of English. Sixty-two percent of the respondents said that English speakers on the post try to help them speak English (Q 31), 96% said their drill sergeant always uses English during training (Q 34), and 85% said they speak English when they are not in class (Q 28). When asked where they used English when not in class, respondents to whom this question applied answered "yes" most frequently--92%--to the situation "with English speakers on the post"; 73% answered "yes" to "during Army training," and 62%, to "with other students after classes (Q 28). (Taken as a proportion of the total respondents, the percentages become 80%, 62%, and 53%.)

It appears that, among all contextual features in the ESL program, students see their English-speaking peers in BSEP and around the post as the most effective stimulus for learning English. Though they describe the drill sergeants as speaking mostly English, only 2% of respondents named the sergeants as the chief factor in improving their English (Q 20), while 32% named English speaking soldiers.* Not surprisingly, the influence of English-speaking soldiers also appears to be more important than the influence of other ESL students for learning English: The results cited above showed that conversations with "other ESL students" were the least common out-of-class situation in which respondents said they use English. Also, when asked which language they use more in the barracks at night--a setting where students are likely to be grouped with other speakers of their native language--only 32% of the respondents said "English"; the rest said their native language (Q 38).

Despite the perceived importance of English speakers outside the classroom, the responses to one question indicate that the teacher is seen as more important than others in motivating students to keep learning English. Teachers were reported to be much more encouraging than drill sergeants--38% vs. 15%--and than other ESL students--17%. Still, 30% of respondents checked the "other" category in answer to this question, and over half the "other" answers (17% of all respondents) named the respondent himself as providing the major motivation for learning English.

4. What students think about the classes: course, teachers and curriculum. Several questions on the "post" and "combined" questionnaires sought students' judgments about such classroom variables as course difficulty, teaching strengths and weaknesses, and curriculum emphases. These judgments serve to enlarge our description of the ESL programs by adding the student's perspective. These judgments also reveal students' negative or positive feelings about the program.

---

*The major strategy adopted when students don't understand the English-speaking sergeants was reported to be using a "translator"--another soldier who is more proficient in English (38%). The next most frequent strategy was asking the sergeant to repeat slowly (30%). The translator strategy may inhibit soldiers from picking up English from their sergeants.

Answers to these questions indicate that the majority of respondents felt good about the program as a whole. The most general question--"Since you joined the Army, how much has your English improved?"--received only 8% responses of "not at all" during the course, and only 5% at the end of the course (Q 16). Questions directed at the course (Q 22-23) show that 76% of respondents judged the level "just right," while only 10% judged it "too difficult" and 13% "too easy"; 91% either considered the length of the course all right or wanted more of it ("too short," 45%), while only 9% thought the course "too long." Questions about the classroom show that 79% of respondents thought conditions "good for learning" and only 20% "bad for learning" (1% marked both categories, Q 24). Questions about teaching show that 80% of respondents "like...the way the teachers teach the course" while 19% "don't like it" (1% marked both categories, Q 25). On questions about teachers' attitudes toward students (Q 26), 90-93% of respondents answered postively on each of three items: "Do teachers help you to learn the lessons?...explain the lessons well?...care if you are having problems learning?"

Thus, 75% or more of the respondents were positive on items indicating their general feeling about the program. Furthermore, at least 90% of the respondents perceived their teachers as well-intentioned and concerned.

Respondents were also asked about specific aspects of the classes. First, they indicated that the curriculum helps them more in vocabulary--Army words, 29%, other English words, 39%--than in pronunciation (19%) or making sentences (10%) (Q 19).

Second, respondents who didn't like the way their teachers teach (Q 25), gave reasons that reflect either the diverse proficiency levels that teachers must address (teaching is "too fast," "confusing," "assumes we know English," "not enough repetition or explanation"), or reasons that reflect the written focus of many lessons ("not enough conversation," "too much reading and writing").

Finally, when asked what they like least about the course (Q 33), 61% of respondents had something to say: the majority of the responses falling into a clear-cut category were criticisms of course content and materials (17% of respondents who answered this question), including the prevalence of written exercises in the course. The next most frequent category was criticism of teachers ("too fast," "don't explain enough," "don't know Army materials"). Other common criticisms were: the course is too short (9%), there's not enough speaking (8%), and not enough time to study (6%). Twenty-five percent of responses fell into a miscellaneous category that included: too little stimulation and discipline in the classroom, too much math, and too much spelling.

A common perception emerges in the responses about specific aspects of the classes. Students seem to think written work is over-stressed and oral practice under-stressed in the classroom. This perception emerges even more strongly in the next group of questions.

5. Students' suggestions for improving the program. We posed several questions to the "combined" and "post" respondents to find out what they thought might help them learn English better. In addition, some of the questions from the previous sections imply suggestions for improving the program.

In the section on program characteristics, the most numerous responses to why students' English did not improve much fell into the category "not enough time to study." This result implies the need for either providing a study hall or adding time to the study halls that exist (those that exist usually total 2-3 hours per week). The same implication follows from the responses to another, free-answer question (Q 33): Some students said that too little time to study was one of the things they liked least about the ESL course. Furthermore, students indicated they are motivated to study: 68% of respondents said they sometimes studied English in the barracks (Q 30); 95% of those who answered the question said they would study more if they had the time.

Respondents were asked what would help them learn English better (Q 27). Among the free answers to this question, a surprising 4/5 fell into two clear-cut categories: more opportunities to practice English outside of class (59%) and more practice speaking English in class (22%). The rest of the answers called for upgrading the lab, classroom, and test materials, increasing the duration of the course, and eliminating math and other subjects students feel are less relevant to ESL. When given a series of "yes-no" choices about where they needed more chance to practice English (Q 29), 85% to 88% said "yes" to all three situations presented: in class, during Army training (pre-BT), and off-duty.

Summary of the data on students' attitudes and perceptions (across programs). We must treat the answers on the student questionnaires with caution for a number of reasons. They represent students' perceptions. These may be biased in either the negative or positive direction. Since few students welcome being in ESL, their perceptions may be more negative than the programs merit. On the other hand, students may be reluctant to reveal negative attitudes on forms where they also put their names.* Another reason for treating the results with caution is the small size of our sample. The number of students sampled on the "post" questionnaire and representing an end-of-course perspective is particularly low: N=56. Despite these caveats, we find the respondents' attitudes and judgments surprisingly consonant with our own observations of the ESL programs. Several patterns emerge as we review the responses to questions in the five areas we have discussed.

Respondents are generally positive in their feelings about the program as a whole and their teachers. Over 90% of respondents say their English has improved at least a little since joining the Army (which usually coincides wth starting the program), whether respondents are sampled during the course (the "combined" questionnaires) or at the end of it (the "post" questionnaires). Over 90% say their teachers care about their learning English and try to help them; and 80% like the way their teachers teach them.

However, when we look at the range of questions seeking perceptions of particular program characteristics, judgments of program effectiveness and recommendations for improvements, we find indications that many respondents--indeed the majority--do not feel the course or the teaching methods adequately meet their ESL needs. Despite the high proportion of respondents who say their English has improved (either a little or a lot), we still find that nearly half the end-of-course respondents rated themselves "poor" or lower in speaking English and 2/5 "poor" or lower in understanding spoken English. In addition, only 1/3 of the respondents who were questioned at both the beginning and end of ESL rated themselves higher in any one of the four language modes at the end than they did at the beginning.

---

*We tried to lessen this possibility be explaining to respondents in Spanish and in English, orally and in writing, that the information they gave us would not go on their Army record and would not be seen by drill sergeants or teachers.

Respondents attribute their improvements more to encounters with English-speaking soldiers outside of class than to lessons, exercises, and teachers' help in class--particularly by the end of the course, when 2/3 of respondents attribute their progress chiefly to talking with English-speaking soldiers. Nearly 80% of all respondents say they use English with English speakers on post. Among English-speakers, respondents find drill sergeants less effective than English-speaking peers in stimulating acquisition of English, probably because of the rank and accessibility of peers. Respondents also indicate that the out-of-class context has more potential than the classroom for improving their English. When asked what would help them learn English better, 3/5 specify practice with English speakers outside of class. Nearly 90% say they don't get enough opportunity to talk with English speakers.

What aspects of the course and the teaching methods do respondents find inadequate? Nearly half the respondents say the course is too short, many say they don't have enough time to study, and 95% say they would study more if they were given the time. Some students say they feel lost when the teacher leads the class, perhaps because the teacher pitches the lessons to the more proficient students in the class. As for the content of the course, respondents on the one hand describe speaking and understanding English as their biggest difficulties and, on the other hand, consider just these modes to be the primary gaps in the ESL curriculum. Eighty-five percent say they need more chances to practice oral English in class. Furthermore those respondents who are able to articulate their criticisms in free-answer questions specify a shortage of conversation and an excess of writing and spelling as aspects of the ESL course they don't like. Respondents clearly see reading, writing, spelling, and math as peripheral to their ESL needs, but they report that one or more of these activities are common in the classroom.

If we trust students' perceptions and reports of their perceptions, we can draw several recommendations for improving the program. In fact, these recommendations echo those we have made based on our own observations of the programs:

- Put more oral practice, dialog, and conversation into the classroom.

- Provide an out-of-class environment where students are not only in frequent contact with but are required to communicate individually with English speakers--e.g., pairing or grouping native with non-native speakers in the BSEP barracks.

- Provide a study hall. Allow attendees to talk, but only in English.

Program Differences

We will briefly consider differences between programs on responses to the student questionnaires. Because there are numerous item-specific and uninterpretable differences among posts, and because the number of respondents sampled also varies widely among programs (Table 4-6), we will consider only those differences that constitute characteristic trends.

Students' feelings. One of the more salient trends is in questions indicating students' feelings about the program. These questions may be seen in Table 4-1, in the previous section. We found respondents at Ft. Knox far less positive on several of these questions than respondents in any other program. On the "post" and "combined" questionnaires, we found the following facts about Ft. Knox respondents: (1) Nearly half (49%) "don't like...the way [the] teachers teach the course"--about three times the frequency of the next highest program (Q 25, average 18%; range 6-18% without Ft. Knox). (2) 43% said classroom conditions were "bad for learning"--double the next highest program (Q 24, average 20%, range 6-21% without Ft. Knox). (3) Ft. Knox respondents had the highest percentage of "no improvement in English since joining the Army" 17%, (Q 16; average 8%, range without Ft. Knox 0-11%) and the lowest percentage of "a lot of improvement" (15%, average 31%, range without Ft. Knox 27-53%). (4) They had the lowest percentage judging the course "just right in difficulty" (57%, Q 22; average 76%; range without Ft. Knox 68-89%), the highest judging the course "too easy" (22%; average 13%, range without Ft. Knox 3-13%), and, along with Ft. Sill, the highest judging it "too long" (17%, Q 23; average 9%; range without Ft. Knox and Ft. Sill 4-9%). When asked what they liked least about the ESL course (Q 33), Ft. Knox respondents were clear: the majority specified either teaching methods or curriculum focus--for example, too little "discipline," "stimulation", or

TABLE 4 -6

Number of Questionnaire Respondents by Post

	Pooled Version of Questionnaire[1]	
Post	Pre (n=77) + Combined (n=423)	Combined + Post (n=56)
Fort Benning	88	83
Fort Dix[2]	29	28
Fort Gordon	28	28
Fort Jackson	126	122
Fort Knox	117	112
Fort Sill	80	79
Fort Leonard Wood	32	27
	500	479

[1] The variation among posts is a function of (1) the ESL enrollment at each post at the time of sampling and (2) the number of times each post was sampled: three times (Ft. Benning, Ft. Jackson); two times (Ft. Gordon, Ft. Knox, Ft. Sill, Ft. Leonard Wood), or one time (Ft. Dix).

[2] Students sampled at Ft. Dix were only those taking the locally developed ESL course--not those in the DLI pre-BT ESL course, which was being tested at Ft. Dix at the time of our sampling.

"explanation," and too much writing and math.* Ft. Knox is the only program that requires math exercises regularly and the only program in which students complained about the math.

On a smaller set of questions, we found respondents at Ft. Dix less positive than at other posts. Next to Ft. Knox, Ft. Dix had the highest proportion of respondents saying their English had "not improved at all" (11%), that the classroom conditions were "bad for learning" (21%), and that they "don't like" the way their teachers teach (18%). When asked what they liked least about the course, 36% of Ft. Dix respondents referred to teaching methods or approach, compared with 19% of Ft. Knox respondents; virtually none of the remaining respondents referred to teaching.

On the other hand, respondents at Ft. Gordon and Ft. Benning answered more positively than respondents at other posts on several of the attitude and effectiveness questions. For example, Ft. Gordon respondents gave the highest percentage of "a lot" of improvement in English: 53%, compared with an average of 31% and a range of 15-42% (excluding Ft. Gordon).** As another example, Ft. Benning had the highest proportion of respondents who either wrote "nothing" or left a blank when asked what they liked least about the program: 55% (about half of whom stated "nothing"), compared with an average of 39% (17% of whom stated "nothing"). Ft. Benning and Ft. Gordon also had the highest proportions of respondents who said they do like the way their teachers teach (93% and 91%, respectively, average 79% across all posts).

The apparent differences in students' attitudes among programs could stem from a number of factors: variations in the programs themselves (e.g., Ft. Knox may have somewhat more reading and writing than other programs and does have more math--areas that students tend to consider irrelevant to their ESL needs); variations in how sensitively students perceive program features, and in how able or willing students are to articulate their perceptions on questionnaires. None of the attitude differences we observed appears to be related to differences in the average number of weeks the respondents at each post have been in ESL.

---

*The terms in quotations are English translations of descriptors common in the Spanish short answers of respondents.

**This result is more impressive in light of the fact that most Gordon respondents were in their third or fourth week in the program and that none received the "post" questionnaire, which provides more representation for six-week students.

The out-of-class context. A second salient trend in post differences concerns the nature of the out-of-class environment provided for ESL students. Some programs have potentially more opportunities for learning English outside of class than do other programs. Let us call programs with many such opportunities "high-context" and compare them to "low-context" programs. Respondents in high-context programs tend to give credit to the Army context more frequently than to the course and the classroom in helping them to learn English.

Ft. Leonard Wood sets the pattern of the high-context program. The first aspect of this pattern concerns the number of opportunities students have to use English outside of class. Respondents at Ft. Leonard Wood indicated they have more of these opportunities than respondents at other posts: Ft. Leonard Wood respondents had the highest proportion of positive responses when asked about speaking English outside of class--96% (Q 28, average 85%, range without Ft. Leonard Wood 76-92%), and when asked whether English speakers on post try to help them speak English--85% (Q 31, average 62%; range 50-75%). Ft. Leonard Wood respondents also had the highest proportion of "English" responses when asked which language they use more in the barracks--78% (Q 38, average, 32%; range 7-41%). Finally, when respondents were asked who gave them the most encouragement to keep learning English, Ft. Leonard Wood, along with Ft. Benning, had the highest proportion of respondents who chose drill sergeants (Q 21, 29% Ft. Benning, 23%, Ft. Leonard Wood, average 15%), and, along with Ft.Knox, the lowest proportion who chose teachers (24% Ft. Knox, 27% Ft. Leonard Wood average 38%). (The questions to which these responses are relevant may be seen in Table 4-1).

The second aspect of the high-context pattern concerns how useful the out-of-class opportunities are. Respondents at Ft. Leonard Wood tended to see these opportunities as helping more than classroom activities to improve their English. Sixty-eight percent marked "talking to English-speaking soldiers" in answer to what helped them the most, while only 12% marked "talking to teachers" and 16% marked "exercises in class." These were the highest and lowest percentages for the respective choices of any of the posts: the means were 26%, 25%, and 32% for the respective categories (Table 4-1, Q 20).

Ft. Dix sets the pattern of the low-context program: First, the respondents there indicated they have fewer opportunities to use English outside class than respondents at other posts. When asked what language they speak in the barracks, Ft. Dix respondents gave the lowest proportion of "English"--7% (average, 32%). They also gave the lowest proportion of positive responses when asked whether English speakers on post "try to help you speak English"--50% (average, 62%).

As the second aspect of the low-context pattern, respondents at Ft. Dix indicated their out-of-class experiences have less effect on their English than did respondents at other posts. Only 17% of the Ft. Dix respondents said "talking with English-speaking soldiers" helped them the most to improve their English, while 38% said "talking with the teacher" and 32% said "exercises in class." These proportions constitute the lowest of all posts for the first category and the highest for the last two (classroom-related) categories combined (see averages above). When asked who gave the most encouragement for learning English, Ft. Dix respondents marked "classroom teachers" more frequently than respondents at any other post: 56% (average, 38%).

Finally, Ft. Knox respondents tended on a number of questions to give responses indicating low-context effects. They did not, however, give responses indicating what could be called "high-classroom" effects. That is, they did not attribute language gains to classroom- or course-related factors. Similarly, Ft. Sill respondents tended to indicate high-classroom effects, though not particularly low-context effects.

What context features underlie the low-context and high-context patterns of responses? The most obvious differences in military context between Ft. Leonard Wood and Ft. Dix, as paradigm cases, lie in the unit assignments and the billeting arrangements of soldiers. Ft. Leonard Wood assigns BSEP soldiers to regular BT units along with non-BSEP soldiers. This procedure has the potential for dispersing ESL students widely among native English speakers (see Chapter Six, "Program Characteristics"). Thus, it is possible that many of the ESL students we sampled at Ft. Leonard Wood were surrounded by English-speaking soldiers. It is not surprising that students in these surroundings would attribute their language gains more to out-of-class factors than would students at some of the other posts. Ft. Dix, on the other hand, assigns ESL students to a special ESL unit, quartered separately from soldiers in BT as well as from the English-speaking students in BSEP. It is not surprising that the respondents at Ft. Dix attributed their language gains less to the extracurricular context than did respondents at some of the other posts.

This explanation becomes more speculative when we look at respondents at other posts. Ft. Dix and Ft. Leonard Wood stand at the extremes of low-context and high-context patterns of responding on the questionnaire, and features of the Ft. Dix and Ft. Leonard Wood programs are consistent with these patterns. The picture at other posts is not so clear, however. The posts that share unit assignment features with Ft. Leonard Wood--i.e., Ft. Jackson and Ft. Gordon--and those that share features with Ft. Dix--i.e., Ft. Sill, Ft. Knox, and Ft. Benning--do not share the high- and low-context patterns of responses on the student questionnaires.

There are several reasons why we find an ambiguous relationship between program features and students' responses when we look across programs. First, as we noted earlier, the questionnaire sample size varies widely from program to program, is quite small for some programs (Table 4-6), and represents a brief time frame (the majority of programs were sampled twice, during early 1982): such a sample has limited reliability in representing the students' perceptions at a given program during the year. Second, students may be biased or mistaken in reporting what they see, as we noted earlier. Finally, there is enormous variation among posts and programs, and this variation goes beyond the basic unit assignment features we have distinguished.

There is variation among programs with separate BSEP units. Primarily, we find that ESL students can be housed in isolation, or together with English-speaking literacy students. If together, ESL students can be more or less extensively integrated, depending on the policy of the unit commander. If commanders try for integration, they may be more or less successful depending on the relative proportions of literacy and ESL students at any one time, and these proportions vary over time for a given post.

There is also variation among programs with regular unit assignments for ESL students. The extent to which non-native speakers are dispersed appears to depend on the policy of particular commanders. This variable has not received thorough enough investigation to draw conclusions about what is the typical policy at each post, or whether there is a typical policy at each post. Thus, the students we sampled at Ft. Leonard Wood may have had commanders who uniformly integrate non-native speakers, while the students we sampled at Ft. Jackson and Ft. Gordon many have had commanders with mixed policies. The picture revealed by the questionnaires could change with different samples of students, assigned to different commanders. Note that the size of the ESL population, which varies widely among posts, could also affect assignment policy.

All we can say with certainty is that, first, the posts with regular unit assignment have a high potential for integrating ESL students and for providing high-context influences on English acquisition. Whether ESL students are actually integrated, and to what degree, will depend on variations in policies, procedures, and enrollment conditions. Second, the posts with separate BSEP units, but with literacy and ESL together, have a moderate potential for integrating the non-native speakers, again depending on policies, procedures, and enrollment conditions. Finally, the posts with separate ESL housing have a very low potential for integrating non-native speakers and for providing an out-of-class context that stimulates learning English.*

---

*Note that Ft. Benning--the other program besides Ft. Dix with separate ESL housing, gives students up to two weeks in regular units by virtue of the procedures of assigning incoming soldiers to units. This feature may increase the influence of context on students' acquisition of English.

Implications for Future Planning. This section's implications for future planning of the Army's ESL program include the following:

- The existing program improves soldiers' English language skills.
- Most soldiers like the program and the teachers.
- The program should place greater emphasis on oral skills and oral comprehension.
- Billeting ESL soldiers with English speaking soldiers could provide an additional impetus to English language improvement.
- ESL soldiers feel that they would benefit from additonal study time.
- Many soldiers feel that the program should be of longer duration.

V. PROGRAM EFFECTS

TRADOC provides us with two kinds of indicators of how effective the programs are: (1) the gain in ECL scores that students achieve through the programs and (2) the students' later success in AIT or OSUT.*

The rate of ECL gain is comparable to that of longer courses. Thus, in six weeks, students entering at about 40 ECL finish at about 50-52 ECL. Soldiers with an exit score of 50 or above are much less likely to fail AIT than soldiers who do not achieve an exit score of 50.

ECL Gains**

Overall results. The mean unadjusted ECL gain achieved by all students in the BSEP I/ESL programs over three fiscal years is 12.0 points, or approximately two points per week. As shown in Table 5-1, the mean gain per year varies slightly, with a high for FY80 students of 13.4 points. The FY80 gain is about two points higher than FY79 and nearly three points higher than FY81.

To provide meaningful comparisons to scores in other ESL programs, we must adjust the ECL gains in two ways. First, we look only at those who completed the program. As Table 5-1 shows, the average gain for the 5-7 week students is 1.9 points/week. Secondly, DLI considers scores below 30 to be unreliable and sets all scores in the 0-30 range to 20. Doing this to the TRADOC data lowers the average ECL gain for the 5-7 week group to 1.7 points/week.

An ECL gain of 1.7 points/week compares favorably with gains shown by soldiers in the six-month and three-month pilot courses

---

*Some of the analyses reported here were reported in the AIR Interim Report (Krug & Wise, 1982); but that report (1) uses the unrevised and less accurate base extracted from the TRADOC data in 1/82 and (2) omits interpretation of the analyses.

**Note that the data base on which ECL gains are computed, though revised from the data base used in earlier AIR reports, still diverges slightly from the base on which the other analyses in this chapter were conducted (including analyses of AIT performance): there are about 20 more cases for FY81 in the ECL base than in the base used in the rest of this chapter.

TABLE 5-1

Mean ECL Gains of ESL Enrollees During FY79-81
(Source: TRADOC)

Fiscal Year	Weeks Enrolled	N	Mean Entry ECL	Mean Exit ECL	Mean ECL Gain
79	1-4	241	44.6		12.6
	5-7	662	35.4		11.1
	Total	903	37.8	49.3	11.4
80	1-4	188	45.7		17.2
	5-7	909	36.2		12.6
	Total	1097	37.8	51.2	13.4
81	1-4	163	48.1		11.7
	5-7	661	36.2		10.4
	Total	824	38.6	49.2	10.7
Total	1-4	592	45.9		13.8
	5-7	2232	35.9		11.5
	Total	2824	38.0	50.0	11.9

at DLIELC. It is far more than the ECL gain by the non-enrolled who entered the Army with the six-month DLI group and who were retested nine months later. If we exclude soldiers who have extreme jumps in ECL score in their first few weeks of instruction, the shape of the learning curve for participants in all three programs is very similar. Total ECL gain is thus largely a matter of time allowed to reach a certain level (ECL = 50 or 60 or 70). (See Table 5-1A.)

TABLE 5-1A
ECL Gains for
ESL Programs of Different Length

Program	N	Points/Week	Average Gain
6 months	185	1.3	31 points
3 months	154	1.9	23
6 weeks*	2232	1.7	10.2
6 month control**	50	.5	18

*Counting only soldiers completing five or more weeks. (Counting all 2,804 cases in the TRADOC base gives an average gain of 2 points/week. Soldiers who exit early, however, make unprecedented high gains in a very short time. These gains are probably spurious. Early exit was not an option in the DLIELC courses, although some soldiers reached the maximum score (80+) before the end of the course. In calculating mean gains for the TRADOC data, we set all scores below 30 to 20 to make them comparable with the DLIELC data.

**Over a nine month period.

In Table 5-1, we separate students who finished early (1-4 weeks) from those who stayed the full term (5-7) weeks. Students who left early (n=592) comprise a little over 1/5 of the total (n=2824). Students who exit early tend to start the programs at higher ECL levels: 45.9 (1-4 weeks), 35.9 (5-7 weeks). They also improve at over twice the rate of the other students: roughly 4.6 points per week for the 1-4 week group (dividing 13.8 by 3) vs. 1.9 points for the 5-7 week group (dividing 11.5 by 6). Students who exit early have higher gains and higher exit scores on the average than the rest: 13.8 points gain (1-4 weeks) vs. 11.5 points (1-7 weeks) and 57.7 exit score (1-4 weeks) vs. 47.4 (5-7 weeks).

These figures suggest that some proportion of the 1-4 week students may have been misplaced in ESL and that the gains showed in three or four weeks were spurious. We would expect that students with higher initial ECLs are more likely to finish early. However, we would not expect students to display the unprecedented gains seen here. Theoretically, all students who leave early should have achieved a score of 70 or greater on a mid-term ECLT. Because the mean exit score is lower than 70, it is clear that some of the early completers graduated for reasons unrelated to passing the ECLT. Thus, those who left early because they did pass the ECLT probably account for the unprecedented gains observed in the 1-4 week group. [illegible]s our speculation that these gains arose from a number of students scoring entry ECLs that greatly underrepresented their proficiency in English. Such scores could result from a range of factors unique to the entry test situation: for example, the AIR review team heard many students report--among other things--that they couldn't hear the ECLT tapes well from their positions in the test room, that they didn't understand how to take the test the first time, or that they had had little sleep the night before. When tested at mid-term, these students' scores were more representative and therefore vastly increased. Thus, the mid-term test provided by many of the local programs is clearly useful in filtering out students who were initially misplaced in ESL, as well as other students who don't need ESL training beyond three weeks.

Table 5-1 also shows the mean exit ECL, obtained by adding the mean gain to the mean entry ECL. On the average, students entered at 38.0 and exited at 50.0. The exit ECL varies little by fiscal year: 49.3 (FY79), 51.2 (FY80), 49.2 (FY81).

more likely. We cannot, of course, determine whether this improvement results from the ESL course itself, or from other factors (e.g., the out-of-class context, increased ability to take tests, etc.).

Results for individual posts. Table 5-2 shows the data on ECL gains for the seven major ESL programs during FY79-81 (excluding Ft. Jackson). (We assume that the installation named is the installation where soldiers had their ESL training. While this assumption has a high probability of being true, we cannot be certain that it holds in all cases.)

Extracting from Table 5-2, the gains for 5-7 weeks of ESL were as shown in Table 5-2A (from highest to lowest):

TABLE 5-2A
Total Mean ECL Gains for the
Seven Major ESL Programs

Ft. Sill	12.9
Ft. Bliss	12.8
Ft. Leonard Wood	12.5
Ft. Knox	9.5
Ft. Dix	9.4
Ft. Gordon	8.8
Ft. Benning	8.3

We calculated these gains by setting all scores below 30 to 20, following DLI.

There was also an interaction between entry ECL and program gain, significant at the .001 level: gain scores favor programs where entry ECL is lower. In light of the entry ECL-ECL interaction, we recalculated the program gains shown above adjusted for entry ECL level. The adjusted gain scores are shown in Table 5-2B. The adjusted gains show how the programs would

TABLE 5-2

*Mean ECL Gains for the Seven Major ESL Programs During FY79-81 (Source: TRADOC)[1]

FY	Benning	Gordon	Knox	Wood	Dix[2]	Sill	Bliss
79	7.6	9.5	19.9	16.3	6.9	14.6	11.4
N	(116)	(162)	(35)	(47)	(136)	(47)	(92)
80	8.9	10.2	8.7	11.4	16.3	13.1	14.9
N	(140)	(33)	(270)	(34)	(45)	(190)	(98)
81	8.3	9.9	8.3	9.0	10.6	12.0	10.7
N	(225)	(11)	(142)	(33)	(26)	(113)	(39)
TOTAL	8.3	8.8	9.5	12.5	9.4	12.9	12.8
N	(481)	(206)	(447)	(114)	(207)	(350)	(229)

*(Gains reported only for students who completed 5-7 weeks of ESL)

---

[1] Fort Jackson is not represented in the TRADOC data.

[2] Fort Dix reported more than half the students exiting in 1-4 weeks in FY80-81.

compare if they all had had the same soldiers (in terms of entering proficiency) during FY79-81.

TABLE 5-2B

Adjusted Total Mean ECL Gains for the Seven Major ESL Programs

Ft. Sill	13.4
Ft. Bliss	12.6
Ft. Leonard Wood	11.8
Ft. Knox	12.4
Ft. Dix	11.8
Ft. Gordon	9.3
Ft. Benning	7.5

Table 5-2 also categorizes ECL gains by fiscal year. There is clearly great variation over time for four of the programs: Ft. Knox, Ft. Leonard Wood, Ft. Dix, and Ft. Bliss. Most of this variation is due to a drastic drop in enrollment between fiscal years, leading to a small n that yields either an unusually high or an unusually low mean ECL gain. Variation of this sort is not a reliable indicator of change in program effectiveness. However, in two cases, ECL gains vary widely while the n stays fairly constant: for Ft. Leonard Wood, between FY79 and FY80, and for Ft. Bliss, between FY79 and FY80. At Ft. Dix the mean gain rose by 10 points between FY79 and FY80, while the drop in enrollment (by 2/3) was less dramatic than in the other cases.

What program factors correlate with the difference in ECL gains observed at the different posts? We know that one of the three programs with reliable changes in ECL gains, Ft. Leonard Wood, underwent substantial curriculum changes around the time TRADOC data show the changes in ECL gains. The curriculum shifted from an ECLT orientation, with frequent practice tests using ALC tapes, to a BT orientation, with much less reliance on the ALC and more practice with Army vocabulary and TEC tapes. This change was taking effect during FY80. The drop in ECL gain from 16.3 points to 9.0 points between FY79 and FY81 may have less to do with true program effectiveness than with the shift away from a test-oriented curriculum.

Performance in AIT

We will look exclusively at enrollees' performance summarized across installations.

Changes between FY79-81. How do ESL enrollees do in AIT, and did their performance change between 1979 and 1981? Table 5-3 shows the proportion of enrollees overall and by year who fell into each of four categories of AIT performance: pass, recycle, attrite because of language or academic reasons, and attrite because of other reasons. Recycling refers to a soldier's being moved from one MOS to an MOS taught at a different installation; this generally happens when commanders feel a soldier cannot succeed in the assigned MOS but can succeed in the Army. Therefore, we count both pass and recycle as non-attrition.* The two categories of attrition refer to the two reasons commanders give for a soldier's failure in AIT.

Table 5-3 shows that the overall success rate of the FY79-81 enrollees was 89.0%, with 79.0% passing and 10.0% recycling. The rate of attrition was 11.1%, with 6.0% attributed to language academic difficulties and 5.1% attributed to other reasons.

The rates of success vs. failure vary little between individual fiscal years: 88%, 90%, and 90% success in FY79, 80, and 81 (respectively); 13%, 11%, and 11% failure. However, a major shift occurs between FY79 and 80 in success defined as passing vs. recycling. Soldiers who pass account for 70.8% of the FY79 enrollees in ESL and soldiers who are recycled account for 17.0%; but of the FY80 and FY81 enrollees, passes increase to 81.5% and 84.6% (respectively), and recycling drops to 8.0% and 4.7%. Another major shift is in the reason for failure. Language or academically related attrition accounts for 9.6% and 6.7% of FY79 and FY80 enrollees, "other" attrition for only 2.6% and 3.8%; but of FY81 enrollees, language drops to .99% while "other" reaches 9.7%.

How can we explain these shifts? The drop in recycling and rise in passes observed between FY79 and FY80 suggests that ESL students were doing better in their assigned MOSs. The FY80 and FY81 enrollees did not start the course with better English skills or exit with better skills--so it is not the students' English skills as measured by the ECLT. The shift could result from any of several other factors. This might include a change in policy regarding AIT dispositions at the various posts where ESL enrollees undergo AIT (e.g., more lenient criteria for passing), a change in the distribtuion of enrollees over MOSs (e.g., less difficult MOSs may be less likely to produce recycling), an increase in the MOS-specific qualifications of ESL enrollees along with a better match of assignees to MOSs, or finally, an

---

*This definition differs from that used in other AIR reports where "loss" or "attrition" includes all who do not pass AIT.

TABLE 5-3

Percent of Enrollees in Each Fiscal Year by AIT Performance (Source: TRADOC)

	FISCAL YEAR			
AIT Performance	79	80	81	TOTAL
Fail[1] Acad/Lang	9.6	6.7	0.9	5.9
	(87)	(73)	(8)	(168)
Fail[1] "Other"	2.6	3.8	9.7	5.1
	(23)	(41)	(78)	(2214)
Recycle	17.1	8.1	4.7	9.9
	(154)	(88)	(38)	(280)
Pass	70.8	81.5	84.6	78.9
	(639)	(892)	(683)	(142)
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(903)	(1094)	(807)	(2804)

---

[1] Failure in AIT is attributed to either (1) academic or language deficits or (2) "other" miscellaneous problems (disciplinary, medical, etc.).

improvement in the MOS-specific preparation provided by the BSEP I/ESL courses.

The steep drop in AIT failures attributed to language/academic rather than other problems observed between FY79-80 and FY81 is again not related to changes in ECL scores. It could be due to a change in commanders' criteria for assigning reasons for attrition (e.g., a broadened definition of motivation problems, a narrower one of language problems). The fact that there is a corresponding rise in "other" attrition implies that this is the reason.

Exit ECL and AIT performance. The ECL scores students attain after completing ESL correlate strongly with AIT performance. Table 5-4 shows data on this correlation from the revised TRADOC data base (therefore, updating data reported in Krug & Wise, 1982). The clear demarkation in performance is at ECL of 50:

1. Students with exit scores below 50 are more likely to fail AIT (extracted from Table 5-4):

   Below 50: 13.9%
   50 or above: 8.4%

   The difference is greater for failures due to *language/academic* deficits than for failure due to *other* problems:

   Language/academic Below 50: 8.1%
   50 or above: 4.0%

   Other Below 50: 5.8%
   50 or above: 4.4%

2. Students with exit scores below 50 are *less* likely to be recycled:

   Below 50: 8.7%
   50 or above: 11.2

3. Students with exit scores below 50 are somewhat *less* likely to pass AIT, although the differences are slight:

   Below 50: 77.4%
   50 or above: 80.5%

TABLE 5-4

Percent of Enrollees (FY79-81)
in Each Category of AIT Performance by Exit ECL

AIT Performance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	TOTAL
FAIL (Language/ Academic)	14.19 (63)	5.71 (29)	4.60 (20)	4.19 (20)	5.02 (21)	2.87 (15)	5.99% (168)
PASS	69.82 (310)	81.50 (414)	80.46 (350)	81.34 (388)	78.47 (328)	81.23 (424)	78.96% (2214)
RECYCLE	7.88 (35)	7.48 (38)	11.03 (48)	9.64 (46)	13.64 (57)	10.73 (56)	9.99% (280)
FAIL (Other)	8.11 (36)	5.31 (27)	3.91 (17)	4.82 (23)	2.87 (12)	5.17 (27)	5.06% (142)
TOTAL	100.0% (444)	100.0% (508)	100.0% (435)	100.0% (477)	100.0% (418)	100.0% (522)	100.0% (2804)

In other words, commanders are more likely to pass or recycle ESL graduates who achieve ECLs of 50 or over and more likely to fail ESL graduates who do not achieve 50. ECL cut-offs above 50 do not make as clear a difference as the 50 cut-off in predicting attrition. We should note that the previous AIR report (Krug & Wise, 1982) demonstrated that the 50-ECL level makes a difference for several other indicators of success in the Army--most notably, ratings of soldiers' performance by drill sergeants and by AIT instructors.

Relating exit ECLs to entry ECLs, the analyses performed in the previous AIR report on ESL training (Krug & Wise, 1982) showed that students with entry scores below 40 are less likely to achieve exit scores of 50 or over. (See Table 5-5.)

TABLE 5-5
Students Achieving Exit ECL of ≥ 50 by Entry ECL

Pre-training ECLT	N	% achieve 50+ at exit
Below 40	1711	28
40 or Above	1170	85

Thus we might expect the 40 cut-off for entry scores to predict success in AIT. In fact, the 40 cut-off for entry ECL does make a difference for AIT performance.

ECL gains and AIT performance. How much students gain in ECL points between starting and completing ESL training has clear effects on AIT performance. Based on comparisons of entry and exit ECLs of the FY79-81 enrollees recorded by TRADOC, we find that higher ECL gains are associated with greater success in AIT. (See Table 5-6.)

TABLE 5-6
Attrition by ECL Gains During ESL Training

Gain	N	% attrition
none/loss	464	12
1-15 points	1356	5
> 15 points	984	3

Enrollees vs. non-enrollees. What can we conclude about the effect of the BSEP I/ESL programs on AIT performance? To help evaluate the AIT performance of the FY79-81 enrollees just reviewed, we will compare it against the performance of ESL eligibles who were not enrolled in the programs. This comparison is presented in Table 5-7. Because we have common entry ECL data on enrolled and non-enrolled eligibles, we break down AIT performance by entry ECL for both populations in Table 5-7.

Summing across ECL categories, Table 5-7 shows that:

- fewer enrollees pass AIT than non-enrollees: 79% (enrolled) vs. 85% (non-enrolled), but
- Slightly fewer enrollees fail in AIT than non-enrollees: 11.1% (enrolled) vs. 13.5% (non-enrolled),
- somewhat more enrollees fail AIT for language or academic reasons: 6% (enrolled) vs. 4.7% (non-enrolled),
- however, fewer enrollees fail AIT for other reasons: 5.1% (enrolled) vs. 8.8% (non-enrolled), and
- more enrollees are recycled: 10.0% (enrolled) vs. 1.6% (non-enrolled).

Thus for some categories of performance the program seems to help while for others it does not.

What happens to the soldiers who are recycled to a different MOS? Because there are enough cases among enrollees to cause a large shift in either direction (pass AIT, fail AIT), we followed up on these soldiers through the EMF and DMDC records.

We have been able to follow-up on 218 of the 280 recycled ESL enrollees. (See Table 5-8.)

TABLE 5-7

Percent of FY 79-81 Enrollees and Non-Enrollees at Each Category of Performance in AIT by Entry ECL Level

	NOT ENROLLED						ENROLLED					
AIT Performance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	TOTAL	0-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	TOTAL
FAIL Language/ Academic	7.85 (34)	4.88 (18)	4.31 (10)	1.61 (4)	3.03 (12)	4.65 (78)	7.54 (73)	5.80 (41)	4.60 (21)	5.01 (17)	4.80 (16)	5.99 (168)
PASS	79.91 (346)	83.20 (307)	84.48 (196)	93.57 (233)	87.12 (345)	84.99 (1427)	78.20 (757)	79.63 (563)	80.96 (370)	76.99 (261)	78.98 (263)	78.96 (2214)
RECYCLE	0.69 (3)	1.90 (7)	1.72 (4)	1.61 (4)	2.02 (8)	1.55 (26)	8.16 (79)	9.05 (64)	11.16 (51)	12.68 (43)	12.91 (43)	9.99 (280)
FAIL (Other)	11.55 (50)	10.03 (37)	9.48 (22)	3.21 (8)	7.83 (31)	8.81 (148)	6.10 (59)	5.52 (39)	3.28 (15)	5.31 (18)	3.30 (11)	5.06 (142)
TOTAL	100.0 (433)	100.0 (369)	100.0 (232)	100.0 (249)	100.0 (396)	100.0 (1679)	100.0 (968)	100.0 (707)	100.0 (457)	100.0 (339)	100.0 (333)	100.0 (2804)

TABLE 5-8
ESL Enrollees Who Were Recycled

Recycled Enrollees	N	%
discharged shortly after counted as recycle	40	18.3%
still in the Army	178	81.7%
	218	

Not all of those still in the Army will necessarily finish their first enlistment. Of the 178, 72 (40.4%) were still in the Army two years after being recycled, 77 (43%) had one to two years of service after the date of recycle, 29 (16%) had less than one year in the Army after the date of recycle. If we add the 40 known attritions to those who failed AIT, the percent of failure for enrollees rises to 12.5%, still a little lower than the non-enrollees 13.5%. If we count the 178 still in the Army with those who passed AIT, the pass rate for enrollees rises to 85.3%, exactly the same as the overall pass rate for non-enrollees.

What happens if we match enrollees and non-enrollees in terms of ECL. As we show in Chapter Three, eligibles with lower ECL scores are more likely to be enrolled in ESL than eligibles with higher scores. Thus, the non-enrolled population has higher ECLs, as Table 5-7 demonstrates (comparing column totals between enrolled and non-enrolled eligibles). When we isolate eligibles who score less than 50, we find greater distinctions in attrition for enrollees than non-enrollees:

- For entry ECLs below 50, 11.6% of enrollees fail in AIT compared with 16.5% of non-enrollees.

But for higher scores, enrollees and non-enrollees do about the same.

- For entry ECLs of 50 or above, 9.2% of enrollees fail AIT compared with 8.5% of non-enrollees.

Thus, the programs appear to reduce attrition for the lower scoring enrollees, but they have little effect on--and may even hinder--the AIT performance of higher scoring eligibles--those with entry ECLs of 50 or over. In fact, looking at rates of passing AIT, we find that enrollees with higher scores do considerably worse than non-enrollees in the same score range:

- For entry ECLs of 50 or above, 77.9% of enrollees pass AIT compared with 89.6% of non-enrollees.

Note that ECL cut-offs lower than 50 yield no sharper distinction between enrollees and non-enrollees: isolating eligibles in the 0-29 ECL range, we find enrollee attrition remains between 5 and 6% lower than that of most non-enrollees.

When we relate the entry ECLs of enrollees to their later AIT performance, we find that the 40 ECL cut-off yields the clearest differences in attrition between low and high scorers--corresponding to the 50 cut-off for exit ECL. The effect of the 40 cut-off can be seen in Table 5-7 for the enrollees. As we might expect, the influence of the entry cut-off on AIT performance is much less pronounced than the influence of the exit cut-off, described earlier.

There remain several unanswered questions about the performance of enrollees vs. non-enrollees:

Why is attrition attributed to "other" problems greater among non-enrollees, while attrition attributed to language/academic problems is greater among enrollees?

Why is recycling much greater among enrollees than non-enrollees?

Why is the difference in success rates in AIT for enrollees and non-enrollees no greater than it appears?

Because there is a range of factors that may enter into the disposition of trainees and into how commanders assign reasons to those dispositions, we can provide only speculative answers to these questions. We recall several points made in a recent memo from AIR on issues in ESL training in the Army (Krug 3/82):

> Comparisons between ESL-eligibles who are enrolled in ESL programs and those who are not, cannot be taken at face value....The decision to send a recruit to ESL instruction is not based on the ECLT alone; recruits who are having trouble in IET (whether due to language problems or not) are likely to be referred to BSEP. These recruits, who form a subset of the enrolled group, are those judged to be potential failures....More speculatively, the ESL program itself may increase the probability of failure for some recruits. In

> the TRADOC evaluation, there were several themes in the report that point in this direction. Some recruits simply don't want to be "in school;" avoiding school is one motive for enlisting. Others resent leaving the friends they've made, and the necessity of being assigned to a new group when the ESL program is completed. Still others resent the "dummy" label that may be applied to those sent to BSEP. We cannot apportion the variance among these [factors], but we believe that all are operative for subsets of the enrolled group. (p. 3)

In addition, it is plausible that--once a soldier attrites from AIT--the AIT instructor is more inclined to categorize the reasons as language or academic if the soldier is a former BSEP I/ESL student. The BSEP label may influence how instructors perceive a soldier's problems, or at least, how they document their perception.

Oral Proficiency

AIR developed a test of oral proficiency in English for ESL soldiers in the Army. This test is intended to supplement the ECLT. It provides an independent measure of both production and comprehension skills. Because it tests these skills with no reading or writing by the soldier, it extends the ECLT's measure of comprehension skills (in which soldiers must read and write even in the listening comprehension section). We are also interested in the correlation between the oral proficiency test and the ECLT, and in whether we can confirm the claims of the ECLT designers that ECL scores correlate with measures of production. Results of administering the oral proficiency test to ESL students who attended a three-month course at DLI showed both that oral proficiency measures correlate highly with ECL scores (at least .70 and as high as .89, depending on the subtest of the oral proficiency measure) and that gains in oral proficiency correlate with gains in ECL (at least .5 and as high as .71, for all subtests except pronunciation and total comprehension on the oral proficiency test).

As part of our study of BSEP I/ESL, we administered the AIR oral proficiency test to a sample of 69 students at the beginning of their ESL training. Of these 69, 33 remained in the program the full six weeks of classes and were tested again at the end of their ESL training.

To make sense of the changes in oral proficiency demonstrated by these 33 students, we will compare their results with those of a sample of 43 participants from the earlier study. Table 5-9 compares the two groups on gains in each of seven independent subtests provided by the oral proficiency test, a comprehension total and a production total, each based on adding points for correct responses, and testers' ratings on each of five dimensions of English proficiency--vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension. Gains for students from DLI are measured over three months, twice the duration of the BSEP I/ESL sample's gain period.

TABLE 5-9
Oral Proficiency Gains for the 3-Month DLI Students
and 6-Week BSEP I/ESL Students (Source: AIR)

Oral Proficiency Measure	DLI 3-month Students (n=43)	BSEP I/ESL 6-week Students (n=33)
Comprehension	11.1	5.5
Production	3.4	.8
RATED:		
Vocabulary	1.1	.3
Grammar	1.0	.4
Fluency	1.0	.4
Pronunciation	1.0	- .1
Comprehension	.8	.1
ECL Gain	19.7	13.8

As Table 5-9 shows, the six-week students gained on all measures except pronunciation. Those gains range from 24% to 50% of the gains achieved by the three-month students, (except for the general rating on comprehension, which is 13% of the three-month gains). In overall comprehension, the six-week students gained at about the same rate as the three-month students. On the other measures, they seem to be gaining at slower rates than the three-month students.

On ECL measures, however, also shown in Table 5-9, the BSEP I/ESL sample gained at a higher rate than the three-month DLI sample (13.8 points in six weeks or 2.3 points per week vs. 19.7 points in three months or 1.6 points per week). They also gained faster in ECL than in any measure of oral proficiency.

There are a number of different ways to interpret these results, and we have insufficient information at this point to select one or another interpretation. First, we should point out that the interrater reliability on oral proficiency scores for the BSEP/ESL sample is somewhat lower than that on scores for the DLI three-month sample: .80 - .99 for the three month vs. .75 - .99 for the BSEP I/ESL. Furthermore, the sample sizes are small. Those facts limit the confidence we can place in these data.

If we assume the ratings for both samples to be reliable, then there are at least two alternative explanations for the difference observed. First, it may be that the DLI three-month course presents better training in speaking skills than does the BSEP I/ESL course. Thus the BSEP I/ESL students show slower improvement in oral production, as measured by the production total, but equivalent improvement in oral comprehension, as measured by the comprehension total. Alternatively, it may be that the training in both kinds of programs is equally effective, but that production skills have a later starting point, or threshold, than do comprehension skills for revealing measurable gains.

Implications for Future Planning. This section's implications for future planning of the Army's ESL program include the following:

- A final ECLT score of 50 or above is related to reduced attrition in AIT and favorable ratings by instructors and drill sergeants.
- Enrolled soldiers show substantially higher average gains in ECLT scores than do nonenrolled eligible soldiers (2 points vs. 1/2 point per week).
- Enrolled soldiers are more likely to be recycled than are nonenrolled eligible soldiers.
- Some enrolled soldiers resent being sent to BSEP classes and some feel stigmatized by the experience.
- The ECLT has a high correlation with an oral proficiency test which tests speaking and understanding spoken English.

VI. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

In this chapter we summarize the salient features of the seven programs that we observed. The seven programs are not uniform--they vary in administration, philosophy, curriculum, teaching techniques, and size.

On the next several pages, we describe some of the more critical common features and variations in the programs. We then consider the possible effect that both common program characteristics and variations will have on implementing the new six-week pre-Basic Training curriculum prepared by DLI.

Teachers and Administration

At all of the posts, we found a dedicated teaching staff. Teachers were genuinely interested in presenting a good program and they cared about their students' success.

We also found common features that make the programs weaker than they might be. Two major areas of concern are the procedures required for hiring and supervising teachers.

Hiring. Education Service Officers (ESOs) at each installation hire the teachers for their ESL programs. They must use one of two procedures:

- non-personal services contracts with individual teachers, or
- a single contract with a regionally or nationally accredited school or institution (an institutional contract, technically also a non-personal services contract).

If the ESOs contract with individual teachers, they retain responsibility for administering the program. However, they are limited in their administrative flexibility by regulations governing non-personal services contracts. This contracting procedure requires the ESO to accept the lowest bids. It also requires the ESO to assume that the teachers are fully competent when they are hired. Teachers hired under current non-personal services contracts cannot be required to receive further training.

Only two posts (Fort Gordon and Fort Jackson) still hire teachers individually. Fort Knox did at the time of our study but was changing to an institutional contractor in April 1982. The yearly bidding ritual for individual non-personal service contracts often leads to low teacher morale because good teachers may be bumped by lower bidders. Frequent teacher turnover may be one result of the low bidding system.

An institution that contracts to administer an ESL program is not as constrained by Army regulations and has both more authority and more flexibility. Institutional contractors can hire and pay teachers based on experience rather than on low bid. They can require that teachers participate in developing curriculum and that they take additional training.

However, in reality, the situation may not be very different with an institutional contractor, because the ESO must take the lowest institutional bid. This leads to frequent institutional turnover. All of the current institutional contractors bumped a previous institution by coming in with a lower bid. Burlington County College, the previous Fort Dix institutional contractor, held the longest contract we heard about--two years, nine months.

The lower bid of the new institution can result in lower salaries for the teachers (e.g., at Fort Dix, the same teachers are teaching with the new contractor but for lower salaries). Even when the salaries are lower, however, teachers may be more satisfied with an institutional contract because they then have a measure of job security.

One of the variations that we found across sites was the involvement or lack of involvement of the Education Center and the teachers either in curriculum development or in training. This involvement did not directly correlate with one or another type of contract, but administrators who were not involved cited the contractual or regulatory restrictions as the primary reasons for their non-involvement.

Supervision. Contractual restrictions were also cited as the primary reason that ESOs did not actively supervise teachers or intervene in teachers' choice of teaching techniques in the classroom. In all the programs we found that:

- Teachers are hired on the assumption that they know what to do when they begin teaching. None of the programs has a systematic or extensive orientation for new teachers.

- There is very little supervision of teaching performance or lesson content. Teachers have a great deal of autonomy in the classroom. The situation may be an advantage where teachers are highly skilled and use an organized curriculum; in BSEP it is not. Teacher supervision varies from none, to requiring teachers to turn in lesson plans, to monitoring the students' ECL gains. We should note that many teachers seem to do lesson plans even when not required to.

- Teachers do not meet regularly to address program content and teaching methods. Some programs have occasional teachers' meetings to discuss administrative matters and regulations. No program schedules meetings on content and teaching methods. The exceptions to this statement occur when teachers and/or administrators decide to develop a curriculum.

Teachers' qualifications. Lack of supervision matters less where the teachers are well-qualified and where turnover rates are low. The requirements for teacher qualifications varied only a little across installations. All but one post (Fort Gordon) require a teaching certificate, but only one post (Fort Jackson) requires that teachers have some experience in teaching ESL or a foreign language. Fort Sill requires an academic major in English or reading, but that is primarily so that teachers can move between the ESL and literacy programs. Education Centers usually have three levels of standards for hiring teaching staff: e.g., preferred, better, or acceptable. BSEP I teachers are usually hired on acceptable standards. At one installation, an administrator told us that they were concerned that if qualifications were set too high, they would not be able to find enough teachers. Most teachers have no prior ESL teaching experience.

Turnover rates. With a low turnover rate, teachers can build experience in the program and develop on-the-job skills. If we define low turnover as keeping 50% or more of the ESL teachers for two or more continuous years, and if we consider only those teachers who were teaching during our observation period (December 1981 to March 1982), three of the programs were able to maintain low turnover but three had high turnover rates. One post (Ft. Jackson) that had been able to maintain low turnover for the years before 1982, had a high turnover as a result of the 1982 bidding. The three programs with low turnover include the two very small programs, Fort Sill and Fort Leonard Wood, which usually have only one ESL teacher. Only Fort Dix, among the larger programs, is still able to maintain low turnover.

We have not identified all the factors that contribute to high teacher turnover. The system of low bids may be a major contributing factor, but that would only be relevant at two of the installations with high turnover and would not explain high turnover at two posts with institutional contractors. We also know that many teachers are wives of military personnel stationed at the installation. When their husbands are relocated, they also leave. Low salaries could be a factor, but we do not have information on salary scales for all of the posts.

There are several reasons why high turnover is detrimental to an educational program. First, a high turnover rate makes it difficult to build up a group of teachers who know the program, know what they are doing, and can teach with confidence. Second, because most programs do not have an organized orientation program for new teachers, frequent turnover means more teachers spending time figuring out what it's all about, particularly when there is no organized curriculum. Third, since most teachers are hired with little or no previous training in teaching ESL, any skills they develop on the job are lost when they leave.

Training. Teachers who do not bring strong ESL skills to the job might benefit from training. One available source of training is a Mobile Training Team (MTT) from DLI. We observed the MTT at Fort Sill. The trainer provided useful information on the American Language Course and demonstrated teaching techniques, and most of the Fort Sill teachers thought that the training was useful.

At posts with individually hired teachers, under present contracting procedures, training cannot be mandated, but it can be offered. An institutional contractor may, depending on the contract terms, require teachers to attend training. Most installations do not seem to use the MTT or other training resources, either because of cost, scheduling problems caused by the need to release teachers from class, or the belief that it will not be useful.

For all of the reasons cited above, the strength of a particular BSEP I/ESL program rests heavily on the strengths that the individual teachers bring to the program when they are hired. Yet the hiring procedures do not necessarily bring the most qualified available teachers to the program. Moreover, the hiring procedures do not reward the teacher who improves his or her qualifications while in the program. There can be little incentive to develop skills if in the next round one must underbid even new applicants for the job.

Philosophy, Curriculum, and Teaching Techniques

Among the program variations that we observed, three that seem to have a significant impact on the direction and strength of a program are

- the program goals,
- having an organized curriculum, and
- using modern ESL techniques.

Program goals. Program goals, as expressed by administrators and teachers, vary in the emphasis the program puts on the three goals of

- teaching English language skills for BT or further Army success,
- teaching military information needed to pass BT (or IET), and
- passing the ECLT (i.e., getting a score of 70 or more).

At posts like Fort Dix where the military information goal is stressed, military information gets equal time with English language instruction. At other installations, the amount of military information presented varies from none to less than two hours per day. Within these programs, the amount of military information also varies with the teacher.

At posts where teachers or administrators emphasize the ECLT, teachers use the American Language Course quizzes to monitor the students' progress and give students practice for the ECLT. After the test, teachers usually go through the quiz item by item explaining any items that students had wrong. At one installation, students in their third week are pre-tested with the ALCPT (American Language Course Practice Test) in order to determine if they should take the third week ECLT. This practice in the ECLT may produce high gains that do not necessarily represent growth in English.

Curriculum. By the term "organized curriculum," we mean a syllabus in which teachers know the topics they will cover and the sequence in which they will cover them. To be organized, a curriculum need not be a set of rigid lessons in which every stimulus and expected response is prescribed. An organized curriculum is one for which teachers have a clear sense of program goals, a well-thought-out curriculum guide, and the necessary materials. An organized curriculum is one in which teachers know the content they will be covering on any given day and how each day's content builds on previous content towards accomplishing all of the objectives of the course. Without an organized curriculum, some teachers flounder. In larger programs without an organized curriculum, we observed great variation in program content--and quality of instruction--across classes. Only two of the larger programs had an organized curriculum.

According to Army regulations, Education Centers can use the American Language Course (ALC) or another DLI-approved curriculum for their ESL program. However, neither alternative provides Education Centers with an off-the-shelf, ready-to-use program for BSEP I/ESL six-week courses.

The ALC is not designed as a six-week course. BSEP I teachers who use the ALC must decide which volumes to use and how to use them. DLI provides some instructions for using the ALC in the BSEP I program, but some installations do not have this information. Most teachers do not have sufficient ESL training and experience to select appropriate ALC portions on their own. Moreover, the ALC is meant for students grouped by ability level, a condition that does not exist on most posts.

In addition, the ALC by itself does not meet all of the BSEP I curriculum needs. It must be supplemented with additional materials and activities to provide students with practice in speaking English. And the ALC does not cover the minimal military information that most programs feel committed to present.

Thus, even when a BSEP I program uses the ALC as a major part of its curriculum, administrators and/or teachers must take the initiative to develop a curriculum guide and/or provide the necessary information and training in order for there to be a coherent curriculum. At installations where the ALC is not the major part of the curriculum, curriculum organization and development is even more important. (There is no commercially prepared six-week ESL curriculum that fits BSEP I needs.)

In the past few years, administrators and/or teachers at two posts (Fort Benning and Fort Dix) organized and developed programs that contain separate curricula for English and for military information giving equal time to both parts. At all of the other posts, over time, teachers have supplemented the ALC (which most of them use, to a greater or lesser degree, to teach English) with a variety of commercial or teacher-made materials.

Teaching techniques. The majority of BSEP I/ESL teachers do not use modern ESL teaching methods as we defined these in Chapter Two. Even teachers who use some of the modern techniques do not use them most of the time. Therefore, finding even the occasional use of these methods made a program stand out.

What do we mean by "some teachers used some modern ESL methods some of the time"? In larger programs, we mean we saw at least two teachers using these techniques. We counted use of the techniques if we saw a teacher spend at least 10 minutes of a lesson in speaking and listening comprehension where the teacher spoke less than 50% of the time and used at least two of the techniques described in Chapter Two.

We saw few teachers doing this. Most classroom instruction gives students practice in reading and writing rather than in speaking and listening comprehension. Why? The main reason is that only a few of the teachers have had training in the use of modern ESL methods. Some spend large portions of class time lecturing about language rather than having students use language.

Teachers do not have an accurate concept of what kinds of instruction and practice actually improve skills in using spoken English. Many teachers think that a student is getting significant practice in spoken English when pronouncing words, reading a passage out loud, or following along from written material. One teacher acknowledged the need for more conversation in the classroom and described his effort to meet this need by having pairs of students "improvise dialogs" and present these to the class. However, he lets students write out their dialogs first and then read them, which is practice in pronunciation but not in using spoken English.

Because they count pronunciation drills and reading exercises as "speaking," teachers think that they give their students much more oral language practice than they actually do. At one installation teachers said that there were too many drills in the ALC and not enough practice in using English to communicate. But the materials and activities that they had used to supplement the ALC also did not provide real practice in using spoken English.

To some degree the ALC contributes to the teachers' misperceptions. The ALC is described as developing the "students' ability to communicate," but it contains a large percent of reading and writing exercises and many of its "oral" exercises require the student to use written material as part of the oral response. Because the ALC is based on the premises underlying the Audio-Lingual Method of language teaching, it includes few opportunities for students to meaningfully create extensive spoken interchanges without writing.

Finally, a few teachers believe that their students need the practice in reading and writing. One teacher acknowledged and justified giving more time to written modes than the very low proportion suggested by an Education Center advisor. "You have to have some writing," this teacher said.

Program Size, Selection Procedures, and Military Context

Some of the program variations that we observed are driven by the logistics of recruit assignments and the organization of the installation. The Education Center must cope within these external constraints.

Program size. Two of the programs that we observed (Fort Gordon, which no longer houses BT units, and Fort Leonard Wood) usually have only one ESL class, sometimes two. The other programs usually have four or more ESL classes going at the same time. There seem to be several advantages to having a large enough ESL population to support several classes. First, small programs may get less support from the post commandant and less attention within the Education Center. Second, teachers of single class programs, who may have students entering the program any day of the week, do not know from day to day when students will come in and how many there will be. This makes planning and teaching more difficult. A larger program, like Fort Jackson, can have students entering the program any day of the week, but can put all students from a given week in a newly formed class. At Fort Jackson, after the first week, a teacher doesn't receive more new students. Third, when there are several teachers in a program, it is likely that one of the teachers will have some background in ESL teaching methods.

At posts with several classes, we might expect to find soldiers grouped by language ability. This is the practice at DLI and was part of the original plan for the new DLI-pre-BT course. However, only one of the posts groups students by language ability.

At no post are there enough students to begin more than one class in a given week. For posts which believe it is important for a class to be formed in the first week and remain unchanged after that, ability grouping conflicts with the goal of keeping classes intact. At posts which do distribute entering students over the range of ongoing classes, the principle of keeping all classes about the same size takes precedence over grouping by language ability. At one time, Fort Sill distributed new students according to language ability. They stopped because it made classes too unequal in size and because teachers who had the more limited English speakers did not feel as if they were being successful, particularly in terms of their students' ECLT gains.

Program size fluctuates at most posts from week to week. Fluctuations in program size make administration more difficult and create uncertainties for the teachers. What happens to the teachers when enrollment drops? A large program like Ft. Knox which had 54 people and 5 teachers in March 1982 has only one person teaching ESL as of June 1982. Fort Gordon had 22 students in November and 6 in March. Fort

Benning, on the other hand, had 20 ESL students in January and 52 in late February.

Installations deal with this problem in several ways that are partially determined by whether the teachers are hired through an institutional contractor or directly by the Education Center. Some programs allow class size to be as low as four or five students for a short period of time; other programs shift teachers to other BSEP I classes or have teachers work on curriculum materials. Most programs try to keep teachers on because they expect their enrollment to go up again and they have contract obligations. Frequent teacher lay-offs and hirings are not good for the continuity and efficiency of the program. However, Fort Gordon hires teachers for only three months at a time to be prepared for seasonal changes in enrollments. Fort Knox lays off teachers when the number of students per class drops below ten for a period of time.

Selection procedures. The process by which soldiers are identified as being eligible for ESL and subsequently placed or not placed in the program varies across installations. While these differences have little effect on the internal quality of the ESL program, they do affect the efficiency or ability of the ESL program to do its job: provide ESL instruction for all IET soldiers who need it.

At some posts, selection is made at the reception station. In the "reception station system," one of the Education Center staff (a testing person or counselor) makes the initial identification soon after soldiers arrive at the reception station. At some installations all soldiers who score below 19 on the SelectABLE are interviewed to determine who are the non-native English speakers. At other installations, students are asked to circle their names on the answer sheet of the SelectABLE and/or Education Center staff check the roster at the reception station for Spanish last names, and even screen platoons by asking soldiers if English is their second language.

Soldiers who are initially identified as being non-native English speakers then take the ECLT at the reception station. All soldiers who take the ECLT and do not score 70 or more are eligible for BSEP I ESL. Eligible Regular Army (RA) soldiers are put in the ESL program. Because they are still at the reception station, there is no unit commander to be involved in this decision; eligible soldiers are not held back by unit commanders. However, unit commanders can later refer a soldier to ESL at any time. Eligible National Guard (NG) and Enlisted Reserves (ER) are counseled by NG and ER representatives who usually urge them to take ESL. Those who decide to take ESL sign a consent form. If their extension of six weeks is approved by their home unit, they are enrolled in ESL. (Forts Dix, Knox, and Sill use this system.)

At the other posts, selection is made after the soldier is assigned to a unit. The crucial variable within the "unit system" is whether the initial identification is made by Education Center staff or by the unit commander. Education Center staff use the procedures described above for the reception station. Unit commanders usually send soldiers that seem to be having problems with English to the Education Center for ECLT testing. (The Education Center at Ft. Jackson does not send staff to the units, but the BSEP I counselor calls a unit commander when his unit is filling up to remind him that all non-native English speakers should be sent to the Education Center for ECLT testing.)

In the "unit system," after ECLT testing, the names of all eligible soldiers are sent to the unit commander with the recommendation that they be put in the ESL program, but the unit commander makes the final decision. He has the authority to not place an eligible soldier in the program and to put a soldier who has a score above 70 into the program. Unit commanders whom we talked to about these procedures say that they talk to eligible soldiers to determine their English ability before making a decision. (Forts Benning, Gordon, Jackson, and Leonard Wood use the "unit system.")

Military context. The Education Centers are not responsible for the students' activities during the time they are not in class. Non-class time, which is more than half the working day, can offer many opportunities for soldiers to practice English, and this practice can be an important factor in learning English. Some installations house ESL students in special companies, either in a holding company, in a BSEP I company with other BSEP I soldiers, or in a separate ESL company. Students housed in ESL companies do not meet with native English speakers. Students housed in a regular unit or even a BSEP I company may be put in rooms with other non-native-English speakers or with predominantly

English speakers. Some commanders feel that it helps the students' English to be rooming with English speakers and try to arrange this; others feel it is better for the morale for non-native English speakers to be together; and some commanders have no policy.

At some installations, commanders believe strongly that housing ESL soldiers in regular BT units helps them learn English and also gives them practice in BT. Installations with special companies for ESL students usually also have a program of preparatory BT for these students. Fort Dix has a particularly strong program for this purpose.

Summary

Of all of the features we have described, the five that seem to have the greatest effect on BSEP I/ESL programs are

- having an institutional contractor, because of the possibility for hiring more qualified teachers, greater administrative flexibility, and greater security for teachers,
- having a low teacher turnover rate, because teachers then build skills on the job for the job,
- having an organized curriculum that teachers follow,
- having teachers who use modern ESL teaching techniques, and
- having a student population large enough to support more than one or two classes.

Many of the other features we have described derive from one or another of these five.

Our discussion of program features in this chapter raises the question: How do these features relate to the program outcomes discussed in Chapter Five? We find no obvious association between how the programs compare on ECL gains and how we would appraise the programs in terms of the features we have laid out.

Of course, there are difficulties in trying to associate program features and program outcomes. First, measured ECL gains may reflect factors other than gains in language proficiency, such as entry and exit test conditions. Second, change is one of the most persistent aspects of the programs. Thus, characteristics observed in a program today may have been quite different in the past. For example, enrollment size and student-teacher ratios are relatively unstable features. Teaching techniques are also relatively unstable because teachers come and go. Thus, one teacher may have been quite different in the past. One teacher may emphasize ECLT preparation while another does not. A program may change from emphasizing ECLT to emphasizing BT tasks. For example, the Ft. Leonard Wood program had a steep drop in ECL gains after instituting a new curriculum that eliminated ALC practice tests.

Third, the program characteristics we have identified interact in unpredictable ways. This makes it difficult to relate a particular feature or features meaningfully to ECL outcomes.

Implications for Implementing the New DLI Curriculum

The new DLI curriculum is meant to be an off-the-shelf, ready-to-use, totally prescribed curriculum focused directly on the situation of BSEP I/ESL--that is, preparing soldiers for BT and their Army careers. As such, it is potentially a much more powerful curriculum for BSEP I/ESL than the ALC. However, our knowledge of current students, teachers, and programs leads us to raise some concerns to the people who will be in charge of introducing the new curriculum.

1. Language teachers may need orientation and training to teach military information. The new curriculum will be more compatible with the goals of some programs than of others. In its current version, the new curriculum stresses military information at the expense of language structure. Teachers who are not used to teaching military information may need more orientation and training to feel comfortable with the new course's content and focus than has been planned.

2. The ESL teachers are not as experienced as DLI's orientation program assumes. The current orientation package is meant to be sufficient for an experienced ESL teacher defined as someone with a year of experience in a good ESL

program. Many of the teachers we observed do not meet that criterion. Moreover, teacher turnover in most programs is very high and newly-hired teachers very rarely meet DLI's criterion of "experienced ESL teacher." If teachers do not get a thorough orientation and sufficient training, they will be unlikely to use the course as the developers intended it to be used and the objective of standardizing the curriculum may not be met.

3. Teachers and administrators may resist changing their curriculum. Teachers and administrators who developed their own organized curricula in recent years may be reluctant to abandon all of their own work in favor of the new curriculum. It will have to be "sold" to them. On the other hand, teachers who do not now have an organized curriculum view the new program as a mixed gift. They appreciate getting help, but they are reluctant to give up the autonomy they now have in their classrooms. Unless it is presented to them in a very useful package, they will probably resist using it as it is prescribed and will adapt it to their own teaching mode. Again, undesired diversity may result. In order to be a "useful" package, the curriculum must meet the teachers' needs to serve the students in the classes. The course may be aimed too high for the classes that most ESL teachers have.

4. Teachers and administrators are concerned that the course does not focus on the majority of the student population. In its current version the new curriculum addresses soldiers who enter ESL at ECL 50 and above. This covers only about one-fourth of the student population. If teachers are not given instruction on how to adapt the course to different students' needs, diversity in adaptation will occur, and some adaptations will be more organized and successful than others. An earlier version of the course had a series of options for students at different ECL levels. However, in that version, some students (with low ECLs) would never reach the lessons on military information and the military information was considered to be crucial. Even if those options were resurrected, there would be a need for an organization plan for using different options in the same class. DLI's original plans assumed a single site with a student population large enough to group students by ability. On all posts, students of every ability level are put together in one class. Teachers need instruction in how to use the new curriculum in the reality of their heterogeneous classes.

5. The activities fall within a small range of drills and structured dialogs. The course does not emphasize practice in speaking English. Because they are not trained in current ESL methods, most BSEP I ESL teachers give their students more practice in reading and writing than in speaking and listening. The new program will only reinforce this tendency. During the validations at Fort Dix and Fort Jackson, teachers complained that the new program did not give students practice in conversation and speaking English. In our follow-up of soldiers who had been in the three-month ESL program at Lackland Air Force Base, we found that the most frequent response to the question "What would you like to have had more training in at Lackland?" was "English conversation" (87%). The course's stated objectives emphasize speaking, but the course content does not.

Implications for Future Planning. This section's implications for future planning of the Army's ESL program include the following:

- ESL programs vary from post to post in terms of administration, philosophy, curriculum, teaching techniques and size.
- The low bid contracting system contributes to high teacher turnover and low teacher morale.
- Few ESL teachers have prior experience with teaching English as a second language.
- There is a need for a standardized speaking/listening based curriculum suited to a 6 week program of instruction involving a heterogenious student population.
- Some ECLT gains may be a function of "teaching the test."

References

Benseler, D.P. & Schulz, R.A. Methodological trends in college foreign language instruction: A report. *President's commission on foreign languages and international studies: Background papers and studies*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979.

Brown, H. *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980.

Crandall, J.A. *Adult vocational ESL*. Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1979.

Gingras, R.C. (Ed.) *Second-language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (ed.). Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978, pp. 88-97.

Hornby, P.A. Achieving second language fluency through immersion education. *Foreign Language Annals*, 1980, *13*(2).

Jupp, T.C., & Hodlin, S. *Industrial English: An example of theory and practice in functional language teaching*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975.

Prince, D, & Gage, J.L. Some considerations in adult vocational ESL. *ERIC/CLL News Bulletin*, ERIC Clearing House on Languages and Linguistics, May, 1980, *5*(3).

Schumann, J.H. The acculturation model for second-language acquisition. Gingras, R.C. (Ed.) *Second-language acquisition and foreign language teaching*. Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978, pp. 27-50.

Valdman, A. Implications of current research on second-language acquisition for teaching foreign languages in the United States. Gingras, R.C. (Ed.) *Second-language acquisition and foreign language teaching*. Arlington, VA.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978, pp. 78-87.